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**Presentation: The German federal programme “More Men in ECEC”  
by Jens Krabel, Catholic University of Applied Sciences Berlin**

**Introduction**

In my presentation, I will discuss the German federal programme “More Men in ECEC” (which started in 2010) and its different programme components. Before I describe the subject matter of the programme, I will briefly outline the aims and history background of the programme.

**Aims of the German federal programme “More Men in ECEC”**

The programme aims to:

- raise the number of qualified male workers in ECEC
- initiate processes of “gender sensibilisation” among ECEC workers and implement concepts of gender sensitive pedagogy in ECEC facilities
- broaden career choices for boys and men and, thus, open up new perspectives in a changing labour market

**History Background**

To understand why the Ministry of Family Affairs has developed this programme, it is necessary to outline two factors that led the Ministry to the decision to begin the programme.

First: Alongside the traditional gender equality policy that is primarily directed towards women, the German gender equality policy in recent years has increasingly focused on men and boys as well. The aim of such policies is to provide men and boys with new perspectives beyond restrictive traditional conceptions of masculinities and life plans. The programme “More Men in ECEC” is another step in this direction.

Second: In 2008, the Ministry commissioned my colleague Michael Cremers and me to carry out the (qualitative and quantitative) study “Male ECEC workers in ECEC.” The study perceives a very positive climate for bringing more men into ECEC facilities and reasons that the doors to ECEC facilities are wide open for men. Provider programme directors and administrators of ECEC facilities would like to see more men male ECEC workers and are motivated to take part in measures designed to increase the percentage of men in the profession. Despite this interest, there are hardly any sustainable, coordinated strategies for realizing this aim. Because of other educational topics and day-to-day political demands, provider programme directors and administrators of ECEC facilities don’t have or don’t take time to realize their plans in this respect.

**Programme components**

1. Because of the findings of our study, the Ministry decided 2010 to found the coordination centre “Men in ECEC,” which should—among other things—develop strategies in cooperation with providers of ECEC facilities to increase the percentage of male ECEC workers in the field.
2. In 2011, the Ministry initiated the esf-funded programme “More Men in ECEC,” in which 16 model projects participated. This programme ended last year.

will not present the findings of the study. However, if you are interested, there are already first findings available in English in the meantime; see: ([http://www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de/uploads/media/EECERA\\_2012\\_Brandes.pdf](http://www.koordination-maennerinkitas.de/uploads/media/EECERA_2012_Brandes.pdf);

4. Next year, the esf-funded programme “Career Change – Men and Women in ECEC” will begin.

What are the contents (of work) of these different programme components?

### **1. The coordination centre “Men in ECEC”**

The coordination centre advises policymakers, providers (programme directors), ECEC facility administrators, vocational training schools, and networks to help develop and implement sustainable strategies and measures to encourage men to become ECEC workers (and to encourage more pedagogical professionals to work in ECEC facilities). For example, the coordination office has been advising the Ministry of Family Affairs on the development of the esf-funded programmes “More Men in ECEC” and “Career Change – Men and Women in ECEC.”

The coordination centre provides information about ways to enter the profession and about the situation in the practice. On our website and in our conferences, expert rounds, and publications, we are also dealing with topics like gender-typical expectations and work activities of gender-mixed ECEC teams (and how to avoid gender-typical behavior), and the general distrust some men are confronted with when they start working in ECEC (for example, the fallacious notion that male ECEC workers are pre-disposed to abuse children).

The coordination centre presents findings of national and international research on the topic of men in ECEC to the German public, supports the national and international research exchange, analyses the data of male employees and trainees of ECEC, respectively. Currently, the coordination centre is carrying out a research project about the possible effects of heterogeneous/diverse ECEC teams regarding their professional work and personal relationships.

Public relations: The publicity work of the coordination centre contributes towards improving the image of ECEC within the society and aims to present the diverse nature of working in ECEC to make it more attractive for men and women.

From 2011 to 2013, the coordination centre accompanied the 16 model projects “MORE Men in ECEC,” advising them and giving them expert, substantive advice. Together with the model projects, the coordination centre published eight Toolboxes, addressing topics like e.g. the implantation of gender in ECEC, and strategies for how ECEC facilities could protect children against sexual abuse and male ECEC workers against the general distrust.

### **2. The esf-funded model programme “MORE Men in ECEC”**

Another component of the federal programme “More Men in ECEC” was the esf-funded model programme “MORE Men in ECEC”. Within this model programme, sixteen model projects all over Germany (with a budget of 13 million euro) aimed to raise the percentage of men working in ECEC and to start a gender-sensibilisation process in the field of ECEC. To achieve this goal, the 16 model projects carried out a wide range of strategies, projects and measures in different fields of actions.

All model projects have developed, for example, diverse career and occupational orientation projects for boys and young man, respectively. Often, the model projects cooperated with schools. In the framework of the cooperation, the model projects offered internships in ECEC facilities for boys, and sent male and as well as female ECEC workers to the schools to try to give the pupils a more detailed and attractive insight into the profession.” One model project has installed an exhibition about the profession of ECEC workers in an old U.S.-American school bus. This school bus visited conferences, job fairs, and vocational training schools, and invited male and female teenagers to visit the exhibition and to discuss the profession and gender roles and images.

The model projects have developed a wide range of public relations measures, as well, like social media activities, video, cinema, radio spots, and large-scale campaigns, with advertisement strategies, media cooperation, posters, films, etc.

Usually, the public relations measures tried to present the following arguments to the public:

- Male and female ECEC workers are doing a challenging, professional, and responsible job.
- The work of an educator is meaningful and lively, compared to a staid office job, for example. (Video example: The kids need you: On which side do you want to stand?)
- A wide range of men and women are needed in ECEC: There are no “typical” men or “typical” women.
- As a male or female ECEC worker, you can contribute to the education of children with your diverse talents and interests.

The model projects in Hamburg, for example, launched the campaign “Diversity MAN! Your Talent for Hamburg’s ECEC Centers.” These Hamburg ECEC workers that you see on the posters wear t-shirts on which were printed certain professions, specific skills and tasks which play a role in daily ECEC life (cook, nutrition counselor, team player, clown, gardener, actor, mediator, wizard, etc.). The message these ECEC workers want to promote is: “Be everything, become an ECEC worker!”

The model project in Wiesbaden also emphasized the talents men can bring to the profession of an ECEC worker. As this model project was only used stereotypical motifs for their campaign—here you see male ECEC workers as a footballer or racing car driver—it triggered a controversial discussion about using traditional gender clichés in “More Men in ECEC Campaigns.”

We, the team of the coordination centre, were also criticizing for the use of stereotypical gender clichés in this campaign, and we argued with the persons responsible for the model project in Wiesbaden. I remember that—after a longer meeting with the persons responsible for the model project—that they decided to publish a fourth poster with the following content: The poster said: three hay bales, six freaks of nature, and one horse: Your own farm.

The model projects also initiated, in cooperation with ECEC facilities, several gender projects, for example: further gender training for ECEC workers and trainees, and gender-sensitive projects for children, as well as projects with fathers. The model projects also organized events and activities where ECEC workers and parents could discuss gender roles and the general distrust male ECEC

workers are confronted with, and initiate working groups where male ECEC workers could share their specific work experiences.

### **The esf-funded programme “Career Change – Men and Women in ECEC”**

The esf model programme has shown two important findings:

First: There is a growing interest with many men to change careers and become a professional ECEC worker. Second: For these men, career transition to ECEC in Germany is very difficult as it usually means doing a full-time training course in a vocational training school for three or four years without the means to support themselves.

Therefore, the Ministry of Family Affairs will launch, in the scope of their programme “More Men in ECEC,” a new esf-funded model programme called “Career Change – Men and Women in ECEC.”

The model programme will take place from 2015 to 2020 and will aim to create new forms of ECEC teacher training courses for male and female career changers and to optimise existing ECEC teacher training courses, respectively.

The new training courses have to satisfy the following criteria:

- One part of the training has to take place in an ECEC facility, which means that the trainee already works in the ECEC facility.
- The trainee will draw a salary of around 1.200 Euros for working part-time in that ECEC facility.
- The proportion of the male trainees has to be relatively high, as the proportion of men in ECEC differs from region to region.
- Gender issues, like gender sensitive pedagogy, have to be an important part of the training.

## Best Practice for 'MORE Men in ECEC Centres' – Press and public relations work as an essential element

Cornelia Heider-Winter and Birgit Hamm

Since 2011, ideas and public relations measures have been developed in 16 model projects all over Germany to motivate men to choose the profession of early childhood educator. A variety of creative products, ranging from posters and brochures to websites, cinema spots, etc. were created as part of the Germany-wide 'MORE Men in ECEC' model programme. But what measures are most effective for getting through to men? And what might a successful image campaign for the profession of educator look like? In the following, we will summarise the experience gained in the model projects and provide information about effective public relations work.

A number of model projects developed concepts and coordinated activities under a central theme, such as the campaigns 'Diversity, MAN! Your talent for Hamburg's ECEC centres' from Hamburg, 'Strong guys for strong kids' from Stuttgart, 'Educator, a great job' from Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, 'Live your talents – become an educator' from Wiesbaden or 'Become an educator' from Saxony, for example.

The strategy is the centrepiece of a communications concept. It describes the approach as well as which messages are to reach which target group. We also talk about a communicative lever to trigger a change of opinion and attitude among members of the target group. Strategies are developed during an analysis phase. Preparatory considerations are essential for the successful development of the campaign and the associated press and public relations work. Only then can targeted measures be implemented.

This paper describes, first of all, the common starting situation for the different campaigns that were carried out by the model project groups. The target groups were identified, as well as the obstacles and barriers which have prevented men until now from choosing to become an educator. The section on strategy provides a description of the approaches developed by the model projects on the basis of the analysis. These show what motifs, messages and slogans were used to develop measures in the subsequent phase. The measures taken range from online marketing and personal conversations to measures directed at the broader public, such as cinema spots and poster campaigns. The conclusion will draw an initial balance.

### **Starting point of every strategy - the analysis**

Every strategy begins with taking stock of the situation at hand. Spending time on this at the beginning avoids false investments and saves extra work to get back on track after a false start. The essential cornerstones of a campaign are established in the analysis phase, and they have a considerable influence on whether the goal is eventually reached. This often means asking the right questions and answering them in a sensitive way.

### **Who do we want to get through to, and why? Objectives and target groups**

'The journey is its own reward,' is an often-quoted saying, but does not apply to the planning of PR activities. This is because you can only consciously direct public relations measures, if you know your final objective.

The officially stated objective of the model programme 'MORE Men in ECEC Centres' is as follows:

*"With the launch of the ESF model programme 'MORE Men in ECEC centres', the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth strives to promote the development and implementation of strategies to increase the proportion of male educators in ECEC centres over the next three years. The aim is to make boys and men more interested in taking up the profession of educator, to support men in their decision to choose the profession of educator and to improve perspectives for men (and women) in the area of early education and child care. The programme aims to contribute towards reaching the EU goal of 20% male educators in ECEC centres in the medium and long run by testing innovative models and documenting and communicating best-practice experience resulting from those models." (Source: [www.esf-Regiestelle.eu](http://www.esf-Regiestelle.eu))*

Thus, in general, the following three issues can be formulated:

- short-term objective: to achieve a wide-spread presence of the 'MORE Men in ECEC' programme in the media.
- medium-term objective: to increase the number of male students training to become early childhood educators, and improve the public image of the profession.
- long-term objective: to steadily increase the number of male educators in ECEC centres to 20%.

A precise identification of the target group is another essential cornerstone of the public relations work as a whole. The media approach, the corresponding measures and media channels (e.g. classic advertising materials, websites, social networks, etc.) must be chosen to match the target group. The more precisely the target group is identified the more specifically it can be addressed. For this reason, it is important to investigate as many socio-demographic and psychographic features as possible, such as age, interests, media behaviour, attitudes and personal values. We distinguish between primary and secondary target groups. In the model programme, men who face career decisions or want to make a career change are the primary target group. The secondary target group includes parents, teachers, job counsellors, people guiding adolescents, etc., who exercise influence on profession choices. The media are also included, in part, in the secondary target group or qualify as so called mediators.

The importance of career changers as a target group (men who already have a profession, but want to move in a new professional direction) was completely underestimated at the beginning of the model programme. Many of these men contacted the model projects and the Coordination Centre 'Men in ECEC' following the first Germany-wide response in the media. They need a special amount of counselling, because they bring different backgrounds with them, and the existing (or not yet existing) promotion and training opportunities vary from federal state to federal state.

Most of the career changers have a busy life, have many years of practical experience in their jobs and are looking for a meaningful occupation in the area of early education and child care. Among them you may find skilled craftsmen, businessmen, lawyers or media professionals. They can be an enormous enrichment for daily life in ECEC centres with the skills they have acquired in other areas and they provide a untold potential for early childhood education and care.

**What prevents men from choosing the profession of educator?**

In order to find the right strategy for communications work, it is important to gather as much information as possible about the target group and about the image of the occupation. What makes the profession of educator attractive and interesting for men? What are the main obstacles preventing men from choosing the profession? What advantages does the profession offer compared to others?

An investigation of the relevant publications showed that young men mainly chose occupations in the commercial skilled crafts sector. Female trainees mainly chose the services sector. This is confirmed, for example, by an analysis of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) from 2009. Among the 25 most popular training objectives among young men are 13 professions in which 90% of the employees are male. This shows that career decisions of male and female school students depend, above all, on gender (for more information see the "Motivating Boys and Men to Chose the Profession of Educator" guide).

Another argument which appears time and again in the debate about the shortage of men in ECEC centres is the issue of pay. In view of the fact that the top training options for young men - auto mechatronics, trained retail salesman and industrial mechanic – are, upon entry, sometimes paid less well or only slightly better than the profession of educator, might imply that money is not the only decision criterion for the choice of a profession. Rather, it is the prejudice prevalent among the public that educators make hardly any money in comparison to other professions that becomes apparent as one of the main obstacles when recruiting young men for the job of educator.

Public perception is influenced in a similar way by the rarely challenged fact that the profession is inextricably linked to the female gender, and that it is a profession that is generally held in low esteem in comparison to other professions. The importance of early childhood education and care is only gradually making its way onto the public agenda. ECEC centres are only gradually beginning to see themselves as educational institutions, and the idea of educators being competent educational specialists and guides for children in their first years of life is only slowly gaining ground. Against this backdrop, it is easy to forget that men naturally have a role to play in educational processes and that the diversity in society should be reflected in ECEC centres.

### **Why do men decide to become an educator?**

The Hamburg model project discussed the central motivation for choosing a profession among groups of male and female school students and educators. This revealed a great lack of guidance and showed that decisions are often taken randomly and are clearly influenced by friends and acquaintances. Boys take their best friend or their father as a role model when choosing a profession. On the other hand, it was found that male educators often come to the profession as part of a second career training path. Although the profession of educator is often seen as an option at an early stage due to experience gained in internships, many young men initially decide to choose a profession with a 'male' connotation. These men do not pursue their actual career aspiration before their early to mid-twenties. This was also confirmed by a survey among male educators in Stuttgart.

Furthermore, the Hamburg project compared the aspects of their work in an ECEC centre that experienced male educators like with what young men want from their profession. What they had in common was that fun, variety, flexible working arrangements, a diverse range of skills and recognition occupied a central place, concerning both what the profession of educator requires and



the motivation for choosing it. This meant that the focus was on diversity. Many other model projects came to similar conclusions.

### **From analysis to synthesis – the strategy**

A great deal of information is usually accumulated in the course of the analysis, and it must be investigated and prioritised to be finally transformed into a strategy. This requires a high degree of sensitivity without losing sight of the target group, since it often happens that campaigns and motifs are designed in such a way that they satisfy the client, but fail to address the target group. Some female educators in the Hamburg model project questioned, for example, why only men were depicted and why only men were being addressed.

Certainly, there were sufficient grounds for concern that women already working in ECEC centres might feel 'put off' by the campaigns. A certain amount of tact was required to include these female educators in the process. Nevertheless, the model programme has a clearly defined target group - men - who must be addressed explicitly to feel addressed at all. The model projects mastered this challenge by communicating messages in their campaign which also included the women.

### **Messages used to address the public**

As part of the analysis, the model projects identified the communication challenges and developed messages directed at the public for their regional campaigns.

All campaigns in the model projects placed the communication focus especially on emphasising the advantages of the profession for men and on making clear that educator is not exclusively a female profession. The female educators already working in ECEC centres were included in the communicated messages, thus placing a further focus on improving the image of the professional field in general.

In the following we will give some examples of arguments and claims communicated to the press and in brochures:

- A diverse range of men (and women) are needed in early childhood education and care.
- There are no 'typical' men or typical women.
- Early childhood education and care is a matter for men as well as women.
- As an educator I can contribute to the education of children with my diverse talents and interests.
- Educators shape the future and change society.
- Educator is a challenging and responsible job.
- The work of an educator is meaningful and lively.

### **The strategic foundation – campaign directions and slogans**

Most model projects channelled their public relations measures under a central unifying theme. The so-called campaign claim, or slogan, represents the synthesis of the analysis phase and sums up the messages of the campaign, thus making communication easier. This means that the slogan should be

as promotionally effective and fresh as possible. At best it should create a better identification with the campaign's objectives by all parties involved and it should improve recognition of the different communication measures. It should act, as it were, as an 'eye-catching banner'.

The slogan 'Strong guys for strong kids' from the campaign realised by the Stuttgart model project stands for real educational personalities, for example. 'Strong' can have different meanings: authentic, reflective, brave, clear, creative – it is not meant physically. 'Strong' challenges the typical accusation that educators are 'softies', and turns it around. Strong children are an important goal in education, because strong children are independent, confident and resilient. Strong 'guys' can of course also be female. This was a background consideration, for the case that the campaign would be developed into a personnel recruitment campaign after the end of the project. There was some criticism of the slogan, since 'strong guys' was perceived as being exaggerated as 'great guys/heroes'.

The campaign umbrella 'Diversity, MAN! Your talent for Hamburg's ECEC centres' from the Hamburg model project showed, on the one hand, what the job of an educator in an ECEC centre includes: diverse skills, diverse perspectives, every day is different. On the other hand, the motto is an invitation to society, claiming that not only women, but also men are desired - and needed - with all their diversity, in early childhood education and care.

In general, the aim was to reflect the ideas connected with the slogan consistently in all communication measures as far as tone, images and strategic orientation were concerned. This was achieved with a uniform corporate design and wording with a high recognition value. This made it possible to attain a level equivalent to that of a highly recognisable brand, thus establishing very high sustainability. The effect the slogan has, demonstrates once again the importance of the analysis.

### **From messages to motifs**

The first step in implementing a campaign idea is to develop a visual world which brings the slogan or claim and the underlying ideas to life and renders them in a pictorial way. In this respect, it is not only important for the slogan and the image to fit perfectly together, but is also vital for the image to encapsulate the message emotionally. Often there are only seconds in which to grab the onlooker's attention. Therefore, these aspects must be employed with skill and, taking this into consideration, sometimes less is more.

The Wiesbaden model project decided to use provocative motifs, by initially appearing to reinforce traditional gender clichés - a man as a footballer or racing driver. Subsequent evaluation clearly showed that it was precisely these stereotypes which triggered public discussion in Wiesbaden about the project. Initial scepticism towards these clichés sparked useful conversations between members of the project team and people interested in the campaign, dealing with both the view that there are not enough men in ECEC centres and wider gender issues. The Wiesbaden transport company liked the advertising posters on buses so much that it even continued to display them after the booked advertising period had expired.

The Hamburg model project used messages on t-shirts worn by educators to communicate its slogan 'Diversity, MAN!' visually. The t-shirts showed professions that evoke certain associations, for example, cook, set designer or nutrition counsellor which call to mind certain images, specific skills and tasks which also play a role in daily ECEC life. At the same time, they bore descriptive nouns such as 'comforter' or 'conciliator' to symbolise the emotional aspects and responsibilities involved in the

work of trained educators. Hamburg promotes the better integration of men in early childhood education and care with the message: 'Be everything, become an educator!'.

The Stuttgart project decided to show three male educators advertising their profession with first-person messages. The visuals showed portraits of the young men creating a personal and engaging effect. The men make statements that sum up their motivation for choosing the profession of educator, for example: "There is a lot of space for creativity in an ECEC centre and I can contribute my very personal skills and talents." "The job is varied and I can carry out a wide range of activities with the children and we always have a lot to laugh about in the process." The three young men represent different personality traits among the core target group: The 'diversity' aspect, for example, represents the career changer, who chose the profession of educator after a varied career and practical experience. 'The non-conformist' is a youth and health educator and works in a nursery ECEC centre. 'The committed one' became involved in the profession of educator via his hobby and activities as a football trainer.

### **Strategic factors for a successful campaign**

The experience gained concerning how to motivate men to choose the profession of educator in 16 model projects made it possible to identify factors which significantly influenced the success of the campaigns. In this respect, credibility and networking played an important role.

### **Credibility pays off**

It became apparent even in the analysis phase that access to contacts and role models from the profession itself were a way to attract the interest of young men. This was the reason why many model projects chose real educators to be the faces of their campaigns. After all, no one can provide information about his profession more credibly than educators themselves. These men were introduced in a number of publicity measures, and they represented their vocational field as credible and authentic role models. This was probably the first time that so many male educators had been seen in Germany presenting their diverse interests, talents and approaches to the profession.

In addition, experience showed that authenticity pays off. In its first posters, the Wiesbaden project used models pretending to be educators. This made the images look more professional, but as it was obvious that they were not in fact 'real' educators, the power of identification lost out to notions of professionalism.

The welfare association *Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband* in Saxony took a different path in its campaign. The Association decided against using portrait photos of men doing practical ECEC work. Instead an 'empty space' was used to symbolise the lack of men in ECEC centres, i.e. the advertising material showed only the silhouette of a man. This was to avoid over-hasty and clichéd debates about appearance, such as fashion styles, tattoos, etc. The model project achieved authenticity on another level. The aim of the 'We need you!' campaign was to reach out to young men in the Erzgebirge region. The campaign deliberately used the regional dialect in its advertising. The Erzgebirge dialect appeared on large posters and in video clips. This presentation of the dialect attracted attention initially and stimulated debate during the test phase.

### **Achieving more together – networking several players**

Professional networking can make things much easier for initiatives that are as complex as this model programme that also want to make things happen. The complexity of the network depends on the local framework conditions and whether cooperation with other providers or institutions makes sense. ECEC providers often feel like rivals, since they are competing for the same professionals on the labour market. However, nowadays many cities recruit their personnel cross-organisationally. Networking in Hamburg under the coordination of the *Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband Hamburg e.V.* association is an interesting example of this.

The network includes all ECEC providers and associations in Hamburg, the relevant authorities, training and further training institutions, trade unions, selected schools, parents' bodies, voluntary service organisations, as well as initiatives and associations in Hamburg that explicitly address boys and men. Working together, the network not only achieved widespread acceptance for the 'Diversity, MEN' campaign, but was also able to make changes to regulatory aspects in educator training in cooperation with the Hamburg authorities, making a lot of things easier this way. This includes a simplified job search for people attending further training while working, for example. In addition, communication of the project's specific issues reached ECEC providers more easily. Since the campaign was seen as a joint activity, solidarity between the parties involved was strengthened and the profession of educator could be promoted uniformly by joining forces. Some ECEC providers even developed their own campaigns, taking up the main idea behind 'Diversity, MAN!' and placing more emphasis on men themselves. Networking also made publicity work easier. The Hamburg coordination centre rapidly established itself as the first point of contact for the media with respect to the issue 'Men in ECEC'. This meant that journalists no longer had to contact each individual organisation when looking for practical examples. Due to the variety of contacts, a contact partner could be provided within a very short period of time.

The Saxon model project also placed emphasis on networking, making it a cornerstone of its campaign. Local players were deliberately included during the project term. The Regional District Administration, the Youth Welfare Office, the Federal Job Agency and a number of ECEC providers in the model project region were involved, and benefited from the public dialogue surrounding 'MORE Men in ECEC'. This meant that the campaign was not only the product of a model project with a limited timeframe, but was also conceived as a sustainable support system for the existing regional structures involved.

### **Hunting for educators online**

Following an intensive process of stock-taking, the transferral of the results into packages of measures often happens 'organically'. The direction taken by the concept and communication channels should have been developed out of the analysis and, after being packaged in a creative and effective manner, be communicated to the media as coherently as possible.

Of course, budget has a great influence on the framework conditions of public relations work. Precise budgetary planning at the beginning forms the basis for all further planning steps for the measures. This must always be done under consideration of the questions: how best to reach out to a given target group; what timeframe should be applied for completion; what budget is available; what personnel and what external services are needed? When deciding these issues, the cost-benefit ratio should always be considered critically: what coverage does the measure have and what can be achieved using what type of measure and what must be invested to achieve this?

The Internet is an indispensable medium in this respect. Anyone searching for information nowadays 'goes online'. This development is gaining even more momentum through the mobile Internet, which is available almost permanently and everywhere via smartphone. The younger the target group, the more important a targeted approach to online communications becomes. Thus, the question is not whether we want a website or not. This is a minimum requirement. The question is rather, what channels and strategies should we use online?

### **Website**

All model projects set up websites informing the public about 'MORE Men in ECEC' and the profession of educator. Often there was no coherent information about different approaches in the individual Federal States, meaning that interested parties were quickly discouraged when searching for information.

The Stuttgart model project used its website *www.erzieher-werden.de* as the campaign's central information platform. Interested adolescents and career changers, as well as parents, could find all the important information and contacts concerning the profession and could watch the campaign video. The website was advertised in all important information media and on all give-away articles. In addition, a central contact person was indicated, who was able to answer all questions about internships, training and career prospects for anyone interested. This job was carried out by an educational specialist who was employed on a temporary basis.

The website *www.vielfalt-mann.de* is the networking communications tool of the Hamburg project. The multi-media website maintains an affinity with the target group and addresses both school students and people who already have work experience. This online presentation is the first to provide a central summary of all information for Hamburg concerning the profession of educator. It provides detailed information about training and funding opportunities, precise contact persons as well as videos showing male and female educators giving an insight into their daily work. The overall goal was to shorten communication channels and to network activities, because training to become an educator is also a very complex procedure in Hamburg. The website helps men to reach their objectives quickly during the vocational orientation phase and when searching for information, and it indicates who to ask when necessary. The website offers a contact form which has been used a great many times. Within just two years, the model project received more than 500 enquiries asking for advice. Through public advertising and press work, the website, which was promoted prominently on the posters, rapidly achieved high coverage.

Furthermore, the domain name 'Diversity, MEN!' had not been assigned on the Internet in this combination prior to the campaign's start, and it is easy to remember. As a result the website rapidly reached an impressive Google ranking. When searching for 'ECEC centre' and 'educator', *www.vielfalt-mann.de* occupies one of the first ranks out of 1.34 million results – even without the help of an external agency.

### **Social Media**

Life today is unimaginable without social media such as YouTube or Facebook. Young people in particular use these channels to network with one another and to obtain information. And they are also becoming increasingly popular among other groups in society. In Germany alone, 26 million people are said to make use of Mark Zuckerberg's bright idea.

What makes social media so attractive for organisations is the ability to contact the target group directly. Organisations no longer have to use editorial staff to make their issues more visible. They determine themselves how their issues are communicated and receive direct feedback. At the same time, this is where one of the main risks can be found - and is probably the reason why many people recoil from using social media. With respect to the issue of 'Men in ECEC', in particular, there were considerable concerns about eliciting inappropriate responses. Fortunately, these fears were not substantiated.

Nevertheless, a project must consider whether it wants to make use of the social media or not. Using social media involves developing an appropriate strategy for the target group and pages must be kept 'alive' with regular updates. This refers both to contents and to the people communicating via these channels. Therefore, it is recommendable to take this step only if the people involved like the platform, use it actively and there is sufficient time available to maintain its pages. If a page is created only to be fashionable, it will quickly be rejected by users.

Despite the variety of social media available, many model projects concentrate on Facebook and YouTube. YouTube has been and still is used mainly as a distribution medium. During the project term, a number of short reports, image films and cinema spots were created, made available on YouTube and embedded in the respective website from there. The Stuttgart campaign video and the slightly shorter cinema spot on 'Strong guys for strong kids' received more than 7,000 clicks on YouTube in one year, for example.

As part of the Saxon campaign, entertaining and thought-provoking video clips were created and used as the central means for addressing young men. They were also distributed via YouTube, using Facebook, and on the website [www.werde-erzieher.de](http://www.werde-erzieher.de), achieving high coverage in the region.

Hamburg also used YouTube for broader distribution. The number of YouTube films created by the network contributed to the great success of the [www.vielfalt-mann.de](http://www.vielfalt-mann.de) website. Using YouTube, the films can easily be embedded on the website and they emphasise the authentic character of the poster motifs. Educators speak personally in them, and are shown in their daily work as part of the campaign. In addition, they also helped to gain journalists' interest in the Hamburg model project who wanted to contact the films' protagonists.

### **Activities on Facebook as an example**

As one of the most popular networking platforms, Facebook, currently offers a number of opportunities to 'continue' events online. The model projects had a number of factors allowing the creative use of Facebook. Creativity is an essential aspect in combining 'career orientation and social media'. What young adults think about their vocational future voluntarily *and* intensely? - This means there is a constant quest for new ideas to make the issues attractive and keep interest in them alive. In the following we will give two examples of how Facebook was integrated into the campaign.

### **The Nuremberg educator casting event**

The Nuremberg model project used Facebook as a multiplier medium which, together with several other elements, formed part of the advertising measures for the 'ErziehYEAH' campaign. The Nuremberg project wanted to find the campaign's faces using open castings. The initial idea was to search for likeable and dynamic young men as visual protagonists. The campaign's faces had to be authentic, local and have a direct relationship with the profession of educator. The concept for the

campaign included both the use of classic media campaign materials - such as flyers, posters and a website ([www.erzieher-dein-beruf.de](http://www.erzieher-dein-beruf.de)) - and access via Facebook.

The model project organised the casting event in cooperation with Nuremberg vocational training schools. On the day of the casting, students were motivated to take part in the activity through loud speaker announcements. The ensuing photo shooting developed into a popular event at the colleges, and 34 candidates entered.

The resulting photos were published online for voting. The ballot was advertised using flyers, posters, the website and Facebook ([www.facebook.com/erzieYEAH](http://www.facebook.com/erzieYEAH)). Shortly after it was launched, i.e. on the first day, the tool was used 1,500 times. The increasing number of votes was accompanied by lively discussions about the candidates and whether such a voting process made sense. The voting procedure was an experiment and its result was neither foreseeable, nor controllable. The basic rule was, however, that respect must be shown for all candidates. All candidates had an equal chance of winning and each person was entitled to one vote only.

Finally, three very different 'faces' were chosen: Denis, an educator with a great deal of practical experience from a Nuremberg ECEC centre; Uwe, who was pleasant and friendly and still in training; and Julian, who was media-experienced, young and fresh - with his own fan club.

All three of them are still active in the project as multipliers at vocational training fairs, for example. They are released from work by their employers and/or from vocational training school, which was agreed upon prior to their commitment. They explain to young men at recruitment fairs what the profession of educator has to offer. They also appear on posters and advertising postcards for the 'ErzieYEAH' campaign and on the Internet forum 'ECEC men' ([www.kitamaenner.org](http://www.kitamaenner.org)).

### **'Puppet up!' – Hamburg is searching for a male model for a puppet**

With its presence on Facebook, Hamburg pursues the strategy of integrating real contacts established at events into the 'Diversity, MAN' campaign via its fan page. This means that a link to Facebook is considered for almost all events. One example is the 'Puppet up! Be a big kid!' project. A photo competition was held at a career orientation fair, a real-life model for a 'Diversity, Man!' puppet. Since only a few male puppets exist, young men were asked to lend their faces to the project - providing more male power in the ECEC centres involved in the form of a mini-man.

Contestants won a t-shirt, and a photo was taken of them in front of a funny display. The photos were uploaded onto Facebook and released for voting, a process that was open only to fans. Within a few days, the number of fans on the page had multiplied, reaching more than 800 people by the beginning of March. The young men photographed had rallied support from within their respective circles of friends. This was the reason why the photo competition gained so much attention beyond regional borders. In the end, two winners were chosen and they came especially to attend the presentation of the puppets. This developed into another event which was communicated to the press parallel to the original event. Hundreds of fans and non-fans liked and commented on the photo album on the puppet presentation.

### **Hunting for educators on a personal level**

No matter how creative a campaign might be, it is no substitute for personal contact. In the career orientation phase it is especially important for young men to come into contact with men who have

experience with working in ECEC centres and are familiar with the daily routines there, and who can provide them with competent guidance on their way into early childhood education and care. In the following, we will look at advice available to men, as well as career orientation fairs as an integral part of public relations work.

### **The lifeblood of a campaign: integrated advice**

Campaigns that do not also offer advice and personal contact are doomed to fail. If options are communicated to the public, these must go hand in hand with real answers and solutions to deal with any concrete interest that results. In other words: if you want to motivate men to work in ECEC centres and advertise this in public, there has to be someone answering the telephone and informing interested men about realistic opportunities for entering the profession. This aspect was underestimated when developing the concept for the model programme, which meant that many model projects had to spontaneously resolve the issue of providing the necessary resources during the project term.

The Hamburg model project received a few individual enquires from men who wanted to become educators at the beginning of the project in early 2011. However, when the 'Diversity, MAN!' campaign began in November of the same year, there was a veritable onslaught of enquiries. Within two years, the number of enquiries for advice rose to more than 550, and among these were many queries from men who had already completed training in another profession and had decided to change their career. Their background ranged from bank clerks and retail salesmen to electricians and plumbers to surveying technicians and chefs. Men with an academic background also asked for advice.

The main issues enquired about were the various training opportunities in Hamburg and what requirements had to be fulfilled to be admitted to educator training. Everyone asking for advice also wanted to know about the financial aspects. Since Hamburg offers extra-occupational further training for becoming a state-recognised educator, the individual advice sessions mainly focussed on where to find ECEC centres that offered part-time employment during training.

Before the model programme started, many of the men who wanted to start training were left alone with their questions and had to find out the necessary information in a roundabout way. Against this backdrop, it is not very surprising that many of them got fed up and lost interest. In addition, it has to be considered that, besides all the technical questions, men in particular need extra motivation and strong encouragement. This was an additional task for those providing the advice services.

However, the efforts to provide personal consultancy services as part of the overall public relations concept aimed at attracting more male educators in ECEC centres were worth it. A considerable number of men who sought advice in Hamburg actually started training. Since then, extra-occupational training, which had been rather neglected standard training programmes before that, is now in more demand than ever before. All in all, vocational training schools are now registering 40 percent more career starters - both men and women. New classes have been set up and a further college is planned to cover the demand.

### **Presentations at fairs: presence in career orientation**

There are a number of players in the area of career orientation, many of whom have been active for years. Vocational training fairs form an integral part of the repertoire of measures taken by



companies. ECEC centres currently take a tentative approach towards the recruitment of new talent, and now present themselves occasionally at such fairs with their own booths. The large-scale career orientation events in the regions however show this it is not only that ECEC centres which are clearly underrepresented, but also the entire social and educational field. Nevertheless, those fairs in particular are formats that provide good opportunities to show presence at the right moment - i.e. in a setting where young people are open to the difficult issue of 'career orientation'. Furthermore, the target group is much better represented at these events than is usually the case. Over two days, the Hamburg model project provided advice for more than 800 people at the 'EINSTIEG2011' fair, among them 520 young men.

Personal contact with members of the target group makes it easier to address them more easily on an emotional level. This is reflected by the positive experience gained in many model projects. The presence of male educators, in particular, turned out to be a guarantee of success. They were able to make contact with the young people at the booth in an easygoing manner and describe the job based from the point of view of their own first-hand experience in an authentic and convincing manner.

At the same time, this is one of the few possibilities for young people to experience a male ECEC educator 'live' at all, meaning that they can break down clichés or prejudices. Since men are not so well represented in early childhood education and care, they can be found even less in the respective career guidance. This scarcity value gives them a certain 'exotic status' and generates attention - which is a no easy thing when dealing with young people.

The other side of the coin is the amount of effort involved in career orientation events. Depending on size, a presentation at a fair costs between 3,000 and 6,000 euros and also requires personnel. This might be too much for a individual ECEC providers. Networking can clearly reduce efforts in this respect. On the one hand, a joint presentation by several providers might carry a certain risk due to the competition situation, but, on the other hand, it provides more power to reach the common goal - more men in ECEC centres, and nevertheless each provider can benefit individually. Furthermore, a number of schools, colleges and authorities offer career orientation events which usually cost little or nothing. Here, individual ECEC centres can use the opportunity and recruit new talent.

### **Advertising - mostly cost intensive, but widely effective**

Placing adverts to spread messages and campaign motifs is generally expensive. In addition, there is an apparently endless range of advertising forms and channels. The great advantage is, however, the broad effect of advertising. In the following, as an example, we will show when and why radio, outdoor and cinema advertising are effective.

#### **Radio advertising**

Cooperation with a radio broadcaster is usually very cost-intensive. However, it provides considerable and widespread coverage. This was shown by the cooperation between the 'MORE Men in ECEC - Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania' model project and a private radio broadcaster. The project struck a media partnership with one of the two large private radio broadcasters in this Federal State. This partnership formed the centrepiece of the project's public relations campaign and has proved its worth in all aspects.

For more than two and a half years the profession of educator was promoted by broadcasting a pithy spot twice a day, and a short spot on 'MORE Men in ECEC' was presented at the radio's job fair

regularly. About three quarters of the approx. 250 males from Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania interested in changing their career to become an educator contacted the project's offices due to the radio advertising.

More important than listening figures, however, is the fact that the advertising is repeated regularly, reiterating the message which addresses different target groups and summarising the salient points of the profession of educator. Finally, many interested men did not find out about the project themselves but were informed by relatives or friends. In addition, many partner projects reported that the people in other federal states also heard about the local radio advertising. Finally, ministries of two federal states enquired about adopting the campaign. With the help of this media partnership it was possible to draw public attention to both 'MORE Men in ECEC' and the profession itself, including its attractive, modern aspects. This sustainably improved appreciation of the profession in society.

### **Outdoor advertising**

Outdoor advertising measures also have a broad effect and make a great impression - especially with large posters - due to their imposing format. The Hamburg network took this opportunity to be very present in the city as one of the main factors for the successful launch of 'Diversity, Man!'. It turned out that it was the right decision to initially limit the advertising campaign to a short period, but to comprehensively address as many different media channels as possible during that time. This meant that the project was initially so present in Hamburg that it was difficult to overlook the campaign, and much attention was drawn to an issue which had been completely underrepresented until then. The accompanying press work also did its job.

The Stuttgart project also made use of different media channels. The advertising on buses and trains especially gained a great deal of positive attention. During the weeks after the start of the media campaign, around 250 men called or sent emails expressing interest. When asked, more than half of them said that the posters in the public arena had caught their attention.

In general, we can say that outdoor advertising relating to an issue which is generally new for the public should only be used if sufficient means are available to achieve a real presence. In addition, the message transported by the campaign should motivate or request a certain activity and have an 'Aha!' effect. Furthermore, contact details should be given (in Hamburg: motifs of 'real' educators who work in ECEC centres; the request 'Be everything, become an educator' together with contact information). Otherwise the budget invested will not yield the desired results.

### **Cinema advertising**

The great advantage of cinema advertising is certainly that it cannot be switched off. The viewers are unable to avoid watching a spot, which means that advertising is generally perceived with more attention than on TV, for example. However, the production of a cinema spot involves considerably more effort and cost than the production of a radio ad or poster. The costs for placing the spot must also be factored in.

The Bremerhaven model project produced four cinema spots which intended to draw attention to early childhood education and care and to raise interest. The film concept focused on the contrast between the working environment in ECEC centres and recreation activities. The protagonists in the spot were real ECEC educators, which had a positive effect on the feedback. Through the advertising

clip a number of men from Bremerhaven and surroundings became aware of the project and afterwards asked for information by telephone or email. A total of approx. 81,000 cinema visitors saw the spot.

The Hamburg model project began to advertise in the cinema in 2012. They commissioned an external production company to draw up the concept and to produce the spot. The protagonists in the film are 'real' educators like those on the posters. The spot concept was tailored to the strategic approach of 'Diversity, MAN!' and also worked with the professions shown on the campaign t-shirts. The spot was presented in two sessions and emphasis was placed on showing it prior to films which attract a high percentage of men. It was shown in the pre-programme to the James Bond film 'Skyfall' and 'The Hobbit', for example. The spot was presented for four weeks and more than 330,000 male and female cinema visitors saw it.

The cinema advertising for the Hamburg project was accompanied by outdoor advertising. For this campaign, new advertising formats were used, such as an illuminated *Litfaßsäule* (street advertising pillar), while other formats, however, were rejected. Due to the number of male and female users on the websites and the resulting contact enquiries, it can be concluded that the response to this advertising phase was as high as in the previous year. This is amazing, insofar as the innovative effect of 'Men in ECEC' had already been exhausted for one year and that no comparable press attention could be gained at the second launch of the campaign. Cinema advertising in particular provides the opportunity to address target groups that cannot be reached by other means, for example, with outdoor advertising.

## **Conclusion**

Regional public relations work spread over the whole of Germany has helped men in ECEC centres tangibly to gain more visibility and acceptance over the past two years.

We can observe that the press is dealing with the issue of male educators in an increasingly natural manner. The word 'exotic' is still used in this connection, but men are much more present in images dealing with the issue than in the past - even if texts do not always explicitly refer to them. At the beginning of 2011, there were hardly any images regarding the issue.

Furthermore, vocational training schools for the profession of educator are seeing a clear trend towards increased demand from male and female applicants all over Germany. At some places, the proportion of men among those beginning the training has risen more than ever before. In their forecasts, Hamburg authorities expect that the shortage of trained educators will be relieved in future due to the model project's efforts, for example.

Feedback from the model projects also showed that both have changed the image of male educators and the image of men in society in general. Nevertheless, it was also possible to successfully integrate women in the field of ECEC. This can be seen from the increasingly positive feedback and the rising number of enquiries from women who themselves want to promote the issue of 'Men in ECEC' asking for advice or information material.

All this shows very well that projects that aim to bring about a change in society require professional communication structures and measures. Here, the combination of publicity work and marketing with the provision of competent consultancy is a good prerequisite - both for matters large and small.

ECEC centres can make good use of the work of the model projects. Institutions now have the opportunity to attract increasing demand - i.e. from men motivated to take up the profession of educator - to their centres, showing interested people publicly that they are welcome. However, this can succeed only if career orientation for educators is given the priority it deserves, and administrators and ECEC providers develop a new understanding of their functions as employers and training institutions.

This means a decision has to be made: Do we see the search for (male) educators mainly as a burden, and are measures leading towards this goal taken reluctantly or not at all? Or should long-term gains have priority and will administrators develop a better understanding of their role on a labour market that is providing ever fewer human resources? After all, a lack of skilled personnel is evident in all sectors. Finally, the profession of educator with a focus on ECEC centres is only one of the many options jobseekers may choose. In view of this situation, no institution and no ECEC provider can close their eyes to the issue of public relations work and career orientation.

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## Media relations to promote men in ECEC centres – a balancing act between gender sensitivity and news values

Sandra Schulte

“And if one day, ballet with boys and football with girls has become an everyday part of his work, then maybe Huber's sex will not be an issue any more.”

*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16 August 2013

The experience gained in model projects and at the Coordination Centre 'Men in ECEC' show that the issue 'Men in ECEC centres' is of interest to the media. The general tenor in the articles published over the past years is that men are wanted in ECEC centres. This can be seen from the more than 500 articles published in high-coverage media, such as regional and national daily press, weekly magazines, as well as radio and TV, gathered by the Coordination Centre 'Men in ECEC' alone.

But can articles really help attract more male educators to early childhood education and care? Do they help to overcome the stereotypes that prevent greater diversity of personnel in ECEC centres? How is the issue dealt with in the public discourse under the aspects of gender equality? And what conclusions can be drawn for future media relations work?

To answer these questions, this paper first of all explains the general programme objectives that are to be promoted through media relations, as well as the options available to media representatives to process the information journalistically. Taking into consideration these programme objectives on the one hand, and journalistic working methods on the other, I analyse some articles from the years 2010 to 2013. The results of this analysis will then lead to recommendations for gender-sensitive media relations work, which show the possibilities for preparing media events on the issue of 'Men in ECEC centres', taking into consideration gender-sensitive aspects.

### **Men in ECEC centres – conviction and a change of perception within society**

The model projects and the Coordination Centre were asked to approach the issue 'Men in ECEC centres in media relations work' from a perspective of gender equality. The work of the ESF model projects was aimed at contributing towards achieving equality for boys and men in the female-connoted professional field of early childhood education and care. On the one hand, very young children should be given the chance to experience male attachment figures who assume educational tasks. On the other hand, the programme aimed at an equal representation of men in early childhood education and care. This was the reason why the media relations work aimed to support a tangible change of social perceptions on two levels and in the long term. Firstly, men must be able to imagine working as an educator in an ECEC centre. Secondly, however, the attitude in society must be one which accepts men working with very young children, caring for them, educating them, etc. As part of public relations, the media relations work was aimed at conveying this image to the public and questioning obsolete gender images.

The objective was to draw the attention of as many people as possible to the issue of men in ECEC centres using mass media such as the daily press, weekly magazines and newspapers, as well as radio and TV. Because:

*“Media representatives and journalists are dialogue partners and ECEC centres should establish and maintain a relationship with them. Why? Because they are external opinion makers.*

*[...] This means that the media play a key role due to their high coverage: journalistic diligence means they are ideally independent (critical) and credible. Therefore they have the ability to steer opinion among the public.*

*When journalists report about ECEC centres in the local press, they are multiplying and spreading information - and sometimes an opinion - to a large number of people. [...] And even the best journalist is unable to report a hundred percent objectively. Personal impressions of the ECEC centre will inevitably influence the report.” (Edelmann 2013)*

With respect to 'Men in ECEC centres' it can be said that journalists cannot simply cast off their personal ideas concerning male professional images. In addition, the professional standards of the editorial department must also be considered.

### **Drama, sex and progress, or the unpopular issue of gender**

Thomas Gesterkamp, himself a journalist, describes how journalists deal with the issue 'Men in ECEC centres' as follows:

*“ [...] gender issues have a bad image in many editorial departments. They are considered to be of minor importance, complicated and exotic. This applies even more to the subjects 'men' and 'boys' than to traditional 'women's issues' - no doubt because most decision-makers in journalism are male [...]. However, headlines such as 'The Disadvantaged Sex' or 'Leave Men Alone' (Die Zeit) are not only a result of the unwillingness of journalists to learn, but also of the tendency for dramatisation in the sector as a whole.” (Gesterkamp 2011, p. 5)*

Although gender issues are not very popular with journalists, 'Men in ECEC centres' has nevertheless received a great deal of attention in the media. This fact, which seems to be contradictory at first glance, can be explained by the news value theory. Gesterkamp writes about a tendency for dramatisation throughout the sector. But is it that simple, and why is it so?

A short excursus into the media science theory of news value can help understand the way the media work. It may help to understand the perspective journalism takes on the issue and explain what options journalist have to process information in an article in a way that is acceptable to their editors. Knowing these mechanisms should improve the chance of presenting positive news values in our own media relations work in a gender-sensitive way.

News value theory is an approach which serves to describe the functioning of the media to date in an understandable way. It describes how certain features of events lead to information about them

becoming media news. As early as 1934, Warren named “timeliness, closeness, consequence, prominence, drama, oddness, conflict, sex, emotions and progress” as those factors that turn a piece of information into a piece of news. Consequently, journalists will highlight exactly these aspects of information in their articles, in order to convey them in a way expected in the media. If they do not do this, there is less chance that the article will be published. In 1965, Galtung and Ruge named 'unexpectedness' as one news value among 11 other factors. A surprise has “the best chance of becoming news, only, however, if it surprises the audience within the framework of their expectations.” As we shall see, the news values 'drama' and 'sex' complement one another with respect to 'Men in ECEC centres', resulting in a dramatisation of the sex of the male educator and thus to his stereotyping. The idea of progress, however, relates to a change in social awareness as intended by the model projects and the Coordination Centre, and contributes towards gender-sensitive reporting. The following examples illustrate the different tendencies in reporting.

### **Alien and superstar**

*“The fear of being the only man, asserting oneself as an alien against a whole horde of women is the reason why many men do not become educators.”*

*Tagesspiegel 4 November 2012*

An initial content analysis of the articles published between 2010 and mid-2013 shows that most of the time the reports describe educators in line with gender stereotypes. The evaluation included selected articles that had been published in regional and national daily newspapers or in weekly magazines. Short press releases that did not deliver any information beyond the description of the percentage of men working in German ECEC centres were not considered.

Looking more closely at the subject, it becomes apparent that the news value of an issue is produced by stereotyping. Usually, the articles do not describe the diverse range of activities of an educator, but focus, above all, on those aspects that attribute a special role to the male educator, that allegedly 'corresponds' with his gender. He is there for the boys; he is expected to organise outdoor and science-based activities; he has to be cool; he is expected to play rough and tumble games. This implies that female educators are in charge of the girls, comfort the children, care for them and do crafts-based activities with them. This idea often goes hand in hand with the devaluation of female educators. Male educators are indirectly compared to female educators and they are expected to 'know certain things better'. On 28 February 2011, the daily newspaper *FAZ* titled an article with the headline “Male educators. Alone among women”. This clearly confronts men and women, supposedly to draw attention to the topic using this headline and/or to 'catch the attention of' male and female readers. This polarisation goes hand in hand with a devaluation of women and/or properties that are associated with women. ECEC centres, as the report says, are firmly in the hands of women. Men avoid the job because they do not want to be seen as soft, sensitive and unmanly, and because they want better pay. Terms associated with women, such as 'soft' and 'sensitive', are indirectly devalued and set against the 'hard world of a male workers'.

### **Alone among women, but still a real man**

This world view is reflected in reports about men who originally worked as carpenters, electricians, chefs, bricklayers or soldiers and then changed their career to become educators. As educators these formerly 'hard working' carpenters and bricklayers are described as the 'kids' buddy' or 'friend and person to be looked up to', they are 'more pragmatic', 'more prepared to take risks', 'silent superstars' or simply 'cool guys'. The profession of educator is not for 'wimps'. These kinds of statements imply that male educators are different from their female colleagues: women are not buddies, not to be respected, not friends, they are not pragmatic, not prepared to take risks, not cool, not silent superstars and not hard. Male educators are "re-claiming their territory"<sup>1</sup> this way in media reports, i.e. claims of superiority that are at risk of being lost in a field of work dominated by females, are re-stated. It is supposed that male career changers contribute the special skills they have gained in the 'male' professional world, which they are expected to bring to their new job. A former chef, for example, who cooks with the children, or former carpenters and electricians who do manual activities with the children ...

In an article published in the daily newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* on 10 May 2011, again (!) with the headline "Alone Among Women" and the introductory sentence, "Excuse me, are you the janitor?", educators are associated with stereotyped ideas of men in ECEC centres from the very beginning. Through the implied attribution of manual skills, such as woodworking, metalworking or fixing things, they are given special empowerment, able to be of special benefit, justifying why they are working in an ECEC centre. Obviously, an educator must be described as a man who also plays football and engages in rough-and-tumble with the children, just to make it possible to picture him as an educator in an ECEC centre. In this example - as so often - male educators are not described as people who carry out caring activities. By implication, women are often described in reports as having no manual skills and as being unable to play football. At least, there is scepticism about their abilities in this respect. This makes the men, who allegedly compensate for this deficit, even more important. The same article in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* quotes an educator as follows:

*"Of course women are also able to play football with the children. But most of them do that because they think it is good for the children and not because they really like it. In this respect, men can respond to children in a totally different way [...]. If I see that they are getting a little rough with one another, I let them do it, because I know what boys are like."* (FR, 10 May 2011)

Articles that introduce male educators as 'surrogate fathers' also 'trade on' the function and/or entitlement of men working in ECEC centres. Such articles deprofessionalise the vocation by making ECEC centres out to be something like a surrogate family. This was the case in an article published in the *SZ* newspaper on 27 August 2010, for example:

*"In any case, children obviously enjoy having a man around. Many see Stefan Krausen even as a kind of surrogate father and call him 'dad' sometimes. 'Children need male attachment figures, especially if their father is not at home a lot', says educationalist Sandra Pienta."*

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<sup>1</sup> Foster describes strategies that (newly) re-establish male claims to domination and power in a society that increasingly aims at equality as "reclaiming their territory". (Foster 2006).



The educator portrayed here is presented as a “surrogate father” and the children sometimes call him “dad”. If an educator has a ‘masculinity deficit’ - as posted provocatively in the headline “Educators in ECEC centres: ‘they are not real men’” (SZ, 27 August 2010), he must prove that he actually is ‘a man’ by assuming a father’s role. He must be turned back into a man by assuming his biological function as a man in society in the form of the fatherly role. Imagine it the other way round: a female educator would assume a ‘motherly role’. People would then say that this is not the task of an ECEC centre or that it is unprofessional. No such construct is needed for a woman: she is ‘woman enough’, if she is an educator. To stay with the image of the surrogate family, she is rather the ‘nice lady who does handicrafts’ or the ‘kindergarten lady’.

Men are often described as a contact person for ‘the boys’. Supposedly, women are unable to assume this function. Their gender obviously stands in the way. They are only able to play football “if all else fails” (FAZ, 28 February 2011).

This stereotyping of gender roles is counterproductive. It paints a distorted picture of who assumes what tasks in ECEC centres and how they are done. This will certainly not contribute towards the diversity that is sought in ECEC centres.

But what kind of media report can do without stereotypes and prejudices and be gender-sensitive?

### **Pretend weddings and space shuttles made of cardboard rolls**

An examination of examples of gender sensitivity in reporting shows that, on the one hand, gender equality plays an important role, and, on the other hand, that such reports focus on the personality of the educational staff regardless of gender. It becomes clear that the work done is not determined by gender, but by the person’s interests, preferences and skills. A gender-sensitive report will also describe how male educators or their female colleagues distance themselves explicitly in interviews from the stereotyped assignment of gender roles. The focus is placed on a person’s artistic and social skills and the educational nature of the work. Gender-sensitive reporting also describes how everyday duties of all kinds, e.g. cooking or tidying up, are done equally by male and female educators. These articles highlight the idea of gender equality. On 27 August 2010, the SZ wrote, for example:

*“Stefan has to prepare the meals as much as Sandra, and she also does manual work.”*

Male and female educators are quoted:

*“We want to be role models and not convey stereotypes [...]. Something has to change, if you want to feed your family with this salary, regardless of whether you are a man or a woman [...]. Both male and female educators will have to fight to improve their standing in society and thus their ability to earn money in the future.”*

In this example, men and women are described as progressive when they assume educational tasks on an equal basis. In its article from 28 February 2011, the FAZ quotes a female educator as follows:

*“In the ECEC centre men also have to care and we, as women also have to engage in rough-and-tumble [...]. They [the children] choose their attachment figure regardless of gender.”*

In an article from 20 November 2011, the *tageszeitung* newspaper describes a male educator as follows:

*“Höper is a beatboxer, for example. That is a way of making music with your mouth which helps children when they are learning to speak. He presents his hobby, makes the sounds of tractors, planes and animals. The ECEC children listen agog. ‘This is a way you can have fun if you are bored’, he says at the end. A child answers: ‘Are you bored?’ Everyone laughs.”*

This is an example of how an educator can contribute to the ECEC centre’s work with his hobby, in this case beatboxing. Even if the situation is described as odd or surprising (news values: ‘oddity’ and ‘unexpectedness’) however, it does not lose sight of the professional background, i.e. playful language learning. On the contrary, the educator’s method actually seems to be progressive (news value ‘progress’). The educational nature of the work is emphasised.

The newspaper *Wedel-Schulauer-Tageblatt* reported on 11 November 2011:

*“They are racing drivers, actors or magicians - educators in Hamburg ECEC centres contribute their diverse skills to their profession.”*

This example also refers to the educator’s personality. As a skill is inextricably linked to a person, it is this skill that the person may contribute, regardless of their sex. At the same time, it seems surprising that racing drivers, actors and magicians should work in an ECEC centre. On 16 November 2011, the newspaper *Märkische Allgemeine* quoted an educator who was dissuaded by his friends from taking up a job in the health sector following completion of his community service and theology studies: ‘You are a social person, you are destined to work with children,’ they encouraged him instead. This description places emphasis on social skills and these are presented as relevant to the career choice. The magazine *Menschen*, in its November 2011 issue, describes how an educator refused to be pushed into traditional role expectations: “Great! A man! Finally, our boys have somebody who can play football with them“, they told him at the beginning. Actually I don’t like football, and I am rubbish at it, the educator said. His female colleague was quoted as follows:

*“It is a stupid prejudice always to make the man responsible for football and rough-and-tumble stuff [...], and, Björn actually has artistic skills. That came in handy, because it is not my forte, she adds. Unlike him, she is able to dedicate herself to board games with the patience of a saint. ‘We complement one another,’ Christina says.”*

The personal interests of the educators described are introduced into everyday professional work without male and female educators having to comply with any role clichés. What matters is the skills, and that the educators (regardless of their sex) complement each other in a team.

While stereotypical descriptions of male educators originally prevailed in media articles, a gradual change now seems to be taking place. There are an increasing number of gender-sensitive reports like the ones as described above, and this can be promoted considerably by a strategic preparation of media relations work. This is shown by a day of action organised jointly by the ESF model projects

and the Coordination Centre, for example. The Berlin model projects and the Coordination Centre used the publication of updated figures on men in ECEC centres at a joint news conference to draw attention to gender-sensitive education. The following is a brief description of the strategic approach applied and the success achieved.

### **Day of Action**

At the end of March 2013, the ESF model projects called all players who were interested in attracting more male educators to their ECEC centres to participate in a joint day of action. The aim of the media relations work for this day was to present the quantitative and qualitative developments seen in the ESF model projects. This was the reason why those projects were given priority at the news conference dealing with the issue of gender.

It can be concluded as a result that the media relations work promoting this day of action was very successful in drawing attention to an issue that had not been dealt with very much before, i.e. gender-conscious education.

In an article published on 28 March 2013, the *Tagesspiegel* described the ESF model projects' work as follows:

*"This is not about more football thanks to more men, but about a gender-conscious education that allows both boys and girls to escape their roles [...]. Even stereotypes in songs, such as the 'lanky boy' and the 'chubby girl' can be easily examined with the children after singing such songs." (Tagesspiegel, 28 March 2013).*

The article ends with the call from the Federal Working Group of Parent Initiatives (BAGE e.V.) for a "gender officer for ECEC centres" be established.

The *Berliner Zeitung* reports on an ECEC centre operated by the Protestant District Association:

*"They were rehearsing Sleeping Beauty and a boy was playing a male sleeping beauty. In the children's books available, girls don't always wear pretty dresses. The aim was to give girls the opportunity to 'also enjoy supposedly male activities', says Krabel. The educator shortage provides opportunities for male career changers." (Berliner Zeitung, 3 April 2013).*

The last two articles referred to show that the gender aspect of the work can obviously be highlighted when dealing with the media. By describing how girls enjoy supposedly male activities and by referring to male career changers in the next sentence, the report in the *Berliner Zeitung* proposes a kind of 'gender crossing' in two ways. The media selected an example in which girls experience male attachment figures carrying out activities with a 'female' connotation and, at the same time, girls are motivated to test behaviour with the opposite gender

connotation, i.e. that are supposedly male. Furthermore, it is noticeable that while educators were often described as very important 'role models', above all for boys, at the beginning, a girl is the focus of the article this time. This is progress in reporting. However, the article also criticises girls who wear "pretty dresses" and then praises them because they "enjoy supposedly male activities". This shows how difficult any evaluation of media articles is. The persons described are sometimes criticised and praised at the same time in one article. This is important to bear in mind with respect to the recommendations for action for 'gender-sensitive media relations work' to be introduced later on.

Another way to practise gender-sensitive reporting is to show the diversity of the professional field. *Neues Deutschland* newspaper writes, for example:

*"At work Mauksch never knows what's coming next. Whether he is going to be asked to help build a space shuttle out of cardboard rolls or organise a pretend wedding, whether he is expected to wipe noses or dry tears, whether the group will be cooking or playing football [...] and this is not about serving clichés: 'Men are not only responsible for the workbench, rough-and-tumble and football', emphasises Kneuss: 'They are very good at cuddling, singing and comforting kids as well.'"* (*Neues Deutschland*, 27 March 2013).

This example illustrates how interesting and varied the everyday work of educators in ECEC centres is. The interesting sides of everyday life in ECEC centres become very clear by contrasting apparently different aspects. This comparison promotes the news values 'oddness' and 'progress'. 'A space shuttle made of cardboard rolls and a 'pretend wedding' - a space shuttle stands for technical complexity and progress. But made of cardboard rolls? A wedding marks a 'bond for life'. It is a day carefully prepared by couples a long time in advance. But pretend? This conjures up spontaneity and imagination, freedom and variety. And if 'workbench, rough-and-tumble and football' is placed side by side to 'cuddling, singing and comforting' this creates a field of tension between supposedly male and supposedly female assignments. Both aspects remain in a field of tension that is not negative, but which also does not unravel. It seems that the 'attractiveness' of the profession lies in this tension and in the variety of the activities involved.

The examples shown above show how many stumbling blocks, but also opportunities, gender-sensitive media relations work provides. The challenge involved comes from the fact that everyone involved, although they pursue worthy and progressive objectives, are nevertheless on contradictory territory. Anyone who reports about 'Men in ECEC centres' finds themselves on difficult terrain. And this challenge is often completely underestimated by both external critics and those involved. In the following, I introduce considerations of how to deal with this tension and even how to use it in a constructive manner.

### **Considerations of gender-sensitive media relations work**

In the following, some suggestions for the content of media relations work are provided, taking into account everyday life in ECEC centres and the way the media function, as described above. To say it straight off: there is no panacea for media relations work on the issue of 'Men in ECEC centres', but I will give some general information concerning a gender-sensitive approach. The aim is to achieve a situation where all parties involved approach the complex structure of gender stereotypes, gender sensitivity and news values with care, courage and creativity.

### **General considerations about gender-sensitive media relations work**

When carrying out media relations work on the issue of 'Men in ECEC centres', care should be taken to make sure that all texts, photos and illustrations made available to the media are free from discriminating images of female or male gender stereotypes. All generalising statements should be avoided, their possible effect should be taken into consideration and generalising statements should be replaced by more considered conclusions wherever possible. The merits and characteristics of male and female educators should be presented as having equal value. And the ECEC centre should be described as a place where men are not perceived either as 'tough guys' or as 'wimps', but as members of a mixed team who contributes their diverse range of skills to early childhood education.

The following information may support you when you are writing your own texts or preparing a media event in a gender-sensitive way.

### **Guiding the media**

It is recommended that you prepare the setting in which you want to present the issue of 'Men in ECEC centres' well. We must bear in mind that journalists usually have only one to one-and-a-half hours to attend a media event. The ECEC centres should be aware of the fact that, if such a media event is not carefully planned, the journalists will tend to take over. If that happens, it becomes difficult to control the media event. The same applies when writing your own media texts. These also should be well researched and well written. The time this takes depends on how experienced the writer is.

### **Telling a gender-sensitive story**

As a rule, a media article on 'Men in ECEC centres' will consist of a central narrative, i.e. the story of an individual educator, plus various information and thematic aspects arranged around this story. The aspects are presented in the order of their frequency:

- the proportion of men in German ECEC centres
- the ESF model projects 'More Men in ECEC centres'
- men changing careers from other jobs to become an educator
- pay and other conditions in the profession of educator
- scepticism vis-à-vis men in ECEC centres, current research results and other issues

This structure (a central narrative and various thematic aspects) builds on the example of an individual educator to report about a universal problem – the shortage of male educators – and about possible causes and solutions.

Press texts should also have a narrative structure that tells a story. If ECEC providers and ECEC centres want to do a journalists a favour, they should be clear about the content and structure of the story they want to be told, and the *story telling* method is a good approach to this:

*“Actually, storytelling is nothing more than simply telling an exciting story and following the classical literary rules: describe the starting situation, introduce the conflict, overcome the conflict, make sure the reader identifies with the ‘hero’ and create a good rising curve of excitement up to the climax of the conflict, to finally resolve the conflict with a decreasing curve.” (Sheehy 2013)*

### **Beginning the story**

What is the background to the story? ECEC centres or ECEC providers might describe the background to the story by giving relevant information, for example, the low proportion of men in ECEC centres in Germany, in their region, at their provider, and finally in the individual ECEC centre itself. An analysis of current figures, International Men’s Day, Boy’s Day or other suitable events can be used as a teaser.

### **Conflict and solution in the story**

Recruiting male educators is a fundamental problem for ECEC centres. There are a great many reasons for this, ranging from deeply-rooted gender stereotypes in society that affect gender policy, to the low status image of the profession in society, and pay issues. However, there is no simple explanation of the relationship between cause and effect. This should be explained to the responsible editors, as it cannot be assumed that better pay would automatically lead to more men taking up the profession of educator. Nevertheless, adequate pay even in the training phase is one of the important prerequisites for motivating more potential male career changers to choose the profession of educator.

The pay-related arguments, in particular, run the risk of reproducing gender stereotypes, for example, the idea of the single male bread-winner that is inherent in this criticism, because it implies that men are unable to work in this profession, simply because they cannot feed a family with the money earned. The arguments should rather emphasise the fact that men who choose the profession of educator under the current circumstances must provide for a family together with their partner. The conventions of storytelling mean we can already sense here how the conflict could be solved and how the story can be linked to news values at the same time. A man who cares about his family income together with his male or female partner is more progressive than the image of a traditional single earner.

In addition, I would like to introduce two further possible approaches here. One approach is to focus on the personality of the educator and to place the topic politically as an equality issue. Men in ECEC centres contribute to equality in the same way as women in management positions do. Giving

priority to the idea of progress could encourage journalists to deal with the gender-sensitive aspects of the issue more willingly, because as described at the beginning: 'progress' is an important news factor in the world of the media.

Describing the scenario of a generally gender-balanced ECEC centre provides another solution. What makes the facility different from other ECEC centres? Progressive aspects and unique characteristics must be highlighted, and caring and creative activities as well as early childhood education and care in ECEC centres must be afforded more value and appreciation in general.

The article on 'Profession Branding' shows how the problem of disadvantageous conditions in the profession of educator can be assessed as part of the public relations work and how editorial departments can deal with it.

### **The hero of the story**

Who is the hero in the story about 'Men in ECEC centres'? Of course - it is not the male educator! - It is the ECEC centre or the ECEC provider making efforts to solve the problem of the shortage of male educators. If this fact is not communicated, the male educator will become the hero. In the section on stereotyped reporting I outlined the consequences of this in detail. Of course, he could become a kind of everyday hero, wiping children's noses or changing nappies. But do we always need a hero?

### **The arc of tension in a story**

How can an arc of tension be created in a story? The story of a male educator in his ECEC centre can provide such an arc of tension, because this approach generates proximity to the reader. It makes the story understandable and interesting, if the educator is described as a typical figure as he carries out his work. But what possibilities exist to describe the work in an interesting and gender-sensitive manner?

### **Variations of the story**

If we take a closer look at the different educational areas in ECEC centres (e.g. in line with the Berlin educational programme), i.e. work activities of the educational staff, it becomes apparent that the arc of tension in a story usually has a male or female connotation. We have to be aware of this fact and deal with it strategically. The fact is that hardly any educational area has no gender connotation!

In the Berlin educational programme published by the Regional Administration in 2004, the following educational areas are named: body, movement, health; social and cultural environment; communication: languages, writing culture and media; creative arts; music; basic experience in mathematics, science and technology.

A schematic representation would show three possible ways to tell this story about everyday life, each of these options providing different opportunities and bearing different risks.

### **Areas without specific connotations**

Generally, all educational areas can be assigned stereotypes. The easiest way to avoid such stereotypes is to present or describe the male educator in a setting that is supposed to be free of any such connotations, i.e. when he is making music or playing with the children, for example. This is however not yet a news value. The examples of the educator Mauksch (space shuttle made of cardboard rolls) and Höper (beatboxer) presented above, show how the news values 'progress' and 'unexpectedness in the framework of expectations' can be introduced. It is true that beatboxing is a music style with a male connotation, but it becomes free of gender connotations by explaining that it helps children to learn language. This view places priority on the aspect of professionalism.

### **Male areas**

These include the following educational areas and/or activities:

- basic experience in mathematics
- basic experience in science and technology
- media as a sub-area of communications
- creative art, transformed into activities such as manual work and building
- rough-and-tumble and sports as activities in the educational area 'body, movement and health'.

In gender-sensitive media relations work, it is recommended with respect to these areas that the male educator be shown interacting with both boys *and* girls and that a female educator is also actively involved. If you want to offer stories or photo presentations dealing with areas with male connotations, the arc of tension can be maintained, if a female educator is also involved in the activity. In contrast, situations and photos that show male educators playing football, doing scientific experiments or building things with boys promote stereotypes. A balanced situation would be given if girls are also shown taking an active role and male and female motifs are presented taking an active role. If the situation described above were complemented by a female educator and a girl who are merely spectators, this would however reproduce a stereotype. It is better if they are actively involved.

### **Female areas**

As far as media photos and texts are concerned, the educational area of communication, including language and writing culture, has a female connotation, if reading aloud to children is presented. Reading (picture) stories to children is mostly left to women within the context of everyday tasks. Creative art also has a female connotation, if it is introduced as painting and handicrafts. This is probably the area which is most difficult to communicate. It is an area that needs a change of perception within society, and where most prejudices concerning male educators and the entire profession are rooted. As described at the beginning, it is an important prerequisite however that men can imagine working in such a facility, if the proportion of male educators in ECEC centres is to be increased. Clichés about the profession and about how a boy/man should be, are important reasons why this often fails. Again and again journalists, educational staff and experts distance themselves in their statements from the 'nice lady doing handicrafts' image of the profession.



The areas dealing with body-related activities are a particularly sensitive issue. In view of the social stereotype of maleness which does not allow or even excludes a connection between being a man and caring, associations of sexual abuse may arise. This does not, however, mean that this 'body-related' area should not be described positively and as an integral part of the profession. The only way to generate the image of a caring male educator is not to ignore this sensitive area in media relations work. Caring and helping are important areas of work in early childhood education and care and should be carried out by educational staff regardless of gender. It is especially important here to use all resources and not to ignore this field of activity. When presenting the issue, it is, however, recommendable to focus on how these sensitive areas are dealt with professionally. This should show that a relaxed attitude and attentiveness as well as time for the care work are also important in early childhood education and care. This can also build a conceptual bridge to the idea that the profession of educator is a profession with a future. The caring professions, in particular, will also be fields of work for men in the future providing stable job security.

As research has shown, men's satisfaction with their life still depends today on having a full-time job. On the other hand, there is a desire for a reasonable work-life balance. Paternity leave is an example of how this can contribute to a change in ECEC centres, when fathers accompany their children during their settling-in phase. Leisure time, loving care and family bonds are given more value if parents look after their child together. Many of the men who are interested in the profession of educator say that the insights into the profession they gained during the settling-in phase of their own children motivated them to become educators themselves. Since leisure time and loving care, but also the desire for an adequate work-life-balance are increasing, the profession of educator is becoming more attractive, as explained in detail in the article on 'Profession branding'. This applies in particular to men with a lot of life experience.

This is the reason why this field of activity should also be dealt with in media relations work.

### **Different focuses in the story**

ECEC centres and/or their providers may concentrate on one of these areas or tell different stories within an area, depending on how their media relations work on the issue of 'Men in ECEC centres' has been developed and depending on the extent to which they want to tell an individual story.

If they tell different stories within an individual area, the overtones are especially important, i.e. the story must mention that there is a 'neither, nor' and a 'as well as'. To be an educator means a great deal of freedom and creativity as well as responsibility and care. The educator Mauksch, for example, is responsible for both the 'workbench, rough-and-tumble and football' *and* 'cuddling, singing and comforting'.

Another option is consciously to counter ideas about what an educator does in an ECEC centre, which means to surprise within the framework of expectations - maybe with a bit of humour. In this respect, the creativity of all parties involved is required.

### **Conclusion**

One and the same report may include both gender-sensitive and stereotyped sections. Thus, we cannot simply say: 'there are good gender-sensitive reports or bad stereotyped ones'. Gender-sensitivity, gender stereotypes and news values have a reciprocal relationship in which the individual variables have a tense relationship with each other and must be balanced.

If we consider this field of tension between stereotypes, gender-sensitivity and news values it seems as if a balance is increasingly being achieved within public discourse. While stereotyped reports clearly prevailed at the beginning of the programme, one can now hear more gender-sensitive tones. This success is down to the model projects.

Gender-sensitive media relations work brings the diversity of personalities, activities and properties of male and female educators to life and relates to their professionalism at the same time. There is no need to resolve or hide oppositions, on the contrary: these oppositions reflect the entire spectrum of the profession. They do not create stereotypes, as long as they are not associated with the educator's gender.

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# Generalised suspicion against male ECEC workers and sexual abuse in ECEC centres: an analysis of the current situation and modules for a protection concept

Michael Cremers/Jens Krabel

(This article is published in German, in: Cremers, M./Höyng, S./Krabel, J./Rohrmann, T. (2012): *Männer in Kitas*, Opladen, Berlin, Toronto: Verlag Barbara Budrich, S. 265-288)

The preconception you face when you are a man, the fact that ... that people are always keeping an eye on you, ... it was something I was very conscious of beforehand. Because the media always present men as predators when it comes to children. And I didn't know how that ... well, how that would affect me in my everyday work. (Male ECEC trainee, 23 years of age; Cremers/Krabel/Calmbach et al. 2010, p. 60)

In the beginning it was really difficult for me to let children be close to me. [...] There was something that made me consciously worried and afraid that someone might interpret it in the wrong way. (Male ECEC trainee, 21 years of age)<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

ECEC centres and their providers have the responsibility and obligation to provide children with a safe place free of any kind of violence. And yet we hear again and again of cases of physical or psychological abuse of children. In recent years, awareness of the problem of sexual abuse in educational facilities has also increased, and this also applies to ECEC centres. The current debates in Germany, triggered, for example, by media reports of various cases of sexual abuse and by the establishment of the government "Sexual Abuse of Children" advisory council, have led both to a heightened level of awareness and to concrete measures in the facilities affected.

After a long series of struggles by those affected, it is increasingly being recognized that the well-being of the victim is more important than the reputation of a facility, or "that a facility protects its own reputation when it deals with the problem of sexual abuse in its own ranks with the required objectiveness and professionalism" (Enders 2003, p. 3).

However, sexual abuse and the public debate about it are, presumably, also the reason why it is practically impossible to talk about the issue of "men in ECEC centres" without being confronted by the generalised suspicion of men, which means all men are assumed to be potential child abusers. The area of early childhood education would appear to be a particular subject of such fears because of the physical aspect of the ECEC professional's work. It is therefore little wonder that this generalised suspicion can lead to a feeling of insecurity among (young) men when they are choosing a career, as well as among male students still in training, and among male staff in their practical work, as evidenced by the quotations cited above (see also Kimmerle 2012).

However, not only men, but also parents, female ECEC centre administrators and ECEC workers are in some way affected and to some extent unsettled. For example, some parents specifically do not want their children to be cared for by male ECEC workers, or management or team colleagues are unable to fully "let go" of their generalised suspicion and this vague feeling of insecurity leads them to stop male colleagues or interns from carrying out certain tasks that require close physical contact.

Some (few) ECEC centre administrators and ECEC workers also refuse to accept men into their teams in principle, because of this generalised suspicion. Thus, the prejudice against men working in ECEC centres that is expressed in this generalised suspicion cannot simply be ignored. Providers of ECEC centres and the facilities themselves who do, or want to, employ male staff must examine this generalised suspicion more closely, in our opinion, must also take a close look at the issue of sexual abuse itself and develop best practice approaches for dealing with it.

This is because, *on the one hand*, ECEC centres that present a concept for protection and prevention can also better protect their male staff from misplaced suspicions<sup>2</sup>, as the following example from consultancy practice shows: In one ECEC centre, female ECEC workers realised that one group of four to five children had developed the habit of removing themselves from the group as a whole to play doctors and nurses, after a male intern had completed his internship at their facility. The ECEC workers found the children's interest in sexual matters went a little too far and they decided to speak to have a serious talk with the children about their sexual games and to explain to them that they should not play such games in the ECEC centre. During their talk with the children, two of the older ones said that they had always had fun playing such games, that the intern had played with them and that all of them found these games funny. The children also asked what was so bad about playing doctors and nurses games that they couldn't continue playing them. The ECEC

<sup>1</sup> From a group interview with trainees as part of a survey on male ECEC workers in ECEC centres.

<sup>2</sup> "Concept" as used here means a "written presentation of all content-related points that are relevant in an ECEC centre for the employees, parents, children and providers" (Dupuis 2001, p. 15). "A team uses this to formulate quality criteria for itself, defines what it understands as good quality education and develops ways to realise this" (ibid, p. 18)

workers and the ECEC centre management were unable to cope with the situation. They asked to what extent the intern might have sexually abused the children and whether they should inform the parents immediately.

They sought help from an advice unit specialising in sexual abuse against children. During their talks, it became apparent, among other things, that the ECEC centre did not have a concept for dealing with sexual issues and that the ECEC workers knew very little about child sexuality. The subject of children’s sexuality had been more or less ignored, which led, among other things, to a situation where the female ECEC workers had not spoken either to the parents or to the intern about how children’s sexual development could be supported in the ECEC centre or where the boundaries of their sex education work lay.

After the female ECEC workers had spoken once again to the children and also with the former intern, it turned out that the children had initiated the doctor game themselves and the intern had supported them in doing so in a somewhat naïve manner.<sup>3</sup> A concept for protection and prevention which also includes definitions of sex education principles would possibly have meant in this ECEC centre that the team and the intern would have talked about how to deal with doctor games at an early stage thus preventing later suspicions from developing.

*On the other hand*, however, it is also clear that sexual abuse does happen outside of and inside childcare facilities and is mostly perpetrated by men. That is why such generalised suspicion and sexual abuse are to a certain extent two sides of the same coin, even if, on closer examination, it becomes apparent that both issues develop individually (and separately) in practice.

This article attempts to answer the following questions that arise in this respect:

How can these two issues in practical ECEC centre work, firstly be kept separate from one another analytically, and then brought together in the form of a concept? What strategies, measures and instruments are available to ECEC providers and ECEC centres both to protect their male ECEC workers against generalised suspicion and to protect the children from (sexual) abuse? Before presenting some initial practical considerations and strategies for action at the end of the article, the first two sections presents an independent analysis of each of these two issues and their different dimensions.

## Generalised suspicion – an analysis of the current situation

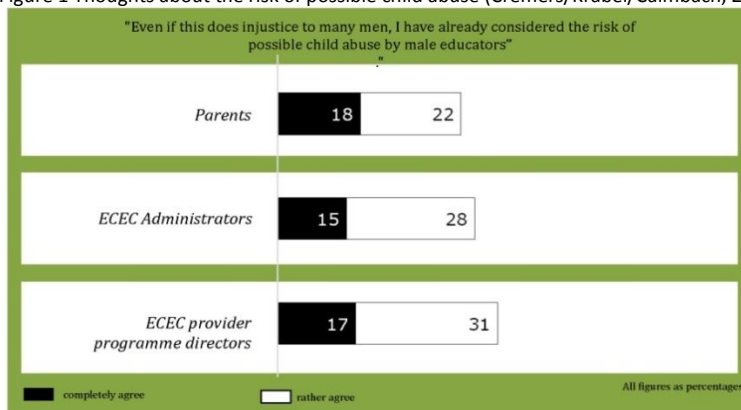
### *Generalised suspicion against men in ECEC centres*

With the exception of a few reports in ECEC magazines, the subject of “Men in ECEC centres” was hardly present at all in the debate within the profession until recently. Only very few studies, in Germany and abroad, have dealt with males working in early childhood education. Although two comprehensive studies have now been published in Germany and Austria, as well as some smaller studies in other countries, it should still be noted that there is not a great deal of empirical information about men in ECEC centres. However, one outcome of the research work published to date both in Germany and abroad is that male trainees and ECEC workers are mentioned again and again in connection with the sexual abuse of children.

Thus, in our representative survey in Germany, 40% of parents, 43% of ECEC centre administrators and 48% of ECEC provider programme directors said they had thought – some more, some less intensively - about the danger of sexual abuse by male ECEC workers (see figure 1).

And the qualitative surveys carried out as part of a research project with male trainees and ECEC workers (male and female) show that male ECEC workers often worry about parents suspecting them of having latent paedophile tendencies.

Figure 1 Thoughts about the risk of possible child abuse (Cremers/Krabel/Calmbach, 2010, p.59)



<sup>3</sup> This example was taken from an interview carried out by us in September 2011 with a female consultancy expert.

The Austrian research project “Elementary – Men Working in Child Education” (Aigner/Rohrmann 2012) arrived at similar results. Approx. 10% of the male trainees and ECEC workers in ECEC centres questioned said they had already been confronted explicitly with suspicion of having committed sexual abuse. The problem of such generalised suspicion becomes particularly clear, however, among the research group of 14 to 16 year old school students who were asked in a written questionnaire about their attitude to male ECEC workers, among other things. Of the boys questioned, 30% admitted that they saw men in ECEC centres as a “danger to children”. A fifth of the boys questioned even stated that they saw male ECEC workers as “perverts who abuse children” (ibid).

An episode that occurred in one of the ESF model projects “More men in ECEC Centres” is of relevance in this respect. As part of the project’s public relations activities, a top league football trainer was asked whether he would help the campaign to increase the percentage of male ECEC workers in ECEC centres. His initial reaction was to show some interest in the matter. The club’s press officer, however, advised him against demonstrating such support publicly, saying that the trainer might be accused of paving the way for paedophiles to enter ECEC centres.

In summary: the generalised suspicion of men working in ECEC centres is more or less established in the minds of many people and therefore certainly acts as one of the barriers that make it more difficult to increase the percentage of male ECEC workers in ECEC centres. What remains unclear, however, is how strong the barrier effect of this generalised suspicion actually is.

### *Possible effects of the generalised suspicion on practical work in ECEC centres*

Remarkably, this generalised attitude of suspicion has little effect in Germany on the high level of public acceptance of male ECEC workers in ECEC centres. This is because, although 40-48% of the parents, ECEC administrators and ECEC provider programme directors questioned had already considered the possibility of sexual abuse by male ECEC workers, the majority of them in the survey spoke in favour of having (more) male ECEC workers in ECEC centres (Cremers/Krabel/Calmbach 2010, p 46ff.).<sup>4</sup> This high proportion of people wanting to see more men in ECEC can also be found reflected in other German and international surveys (Aigner/Rohrmann 2012; Cameron et al. 1999; Rolfe 2005, Mahadevan 2011).<sup>5</sup> One online survey carried out in Germany in 2011 by the pharmacy magazine “Baby und Familie” showed that nothing had changed in this level of acceptance, even following the public debate on sexual abuse in institutions (Baby und Familie 2011).

Despite the high level of acceptance, however, the scepticism towards men expressed in the German survey by those questioned should be borne in mind and should never be underestimated. This is because, *firstly*, while the group who expressed a great deal of scepticism towards men was relatively small (in Germany, for example, only 4% of parents, 2% of ECEC administrators and 3% of ECEC provider programme directors saw a risk in employing men as ECEC workers<sup>6</sup>), in some regions or ECEC centres, sceptics still may represent a larger percentage and may prevent men from being recruited as ECEC worker. What is more, it might be more than enough for one single female ECEC worker, one mother or one father to express suspicion of men in general or a certain man in particular to suddenly turn the subject of “sexual abuse” into a “hot potato” in an ECEC centre and thus unsettle the entire team.

*Secondly*, experience has shown that the positive general attitude in favour of male ECEC workers can also turn, resulting in all men be “tarred with the same brush” as soon as a male ECEC worker or intern is found guilty of child abuse and the media report extensively about it.

And *thirdly*, as the Austrian report on the subject more than any other shows that the generalised suspicion can make it more difficult for young males to decide to train as ECEC worker when they are exposed to the homophobic cliché among their peer group that male ECEC workers are gay and this is also linked with the homophobic prejudice that gay men are child abusers.

*Fourthly*, the generalised suspicion always has a real effect on the work of male ECEC workers. As a result, many male trainees and qualified ECEC workers develop individual strategies in ECEC centres for dealing with generalised suspicion and are very careful in their work, for example, not changing a nappy with the door closed, not sitting children on their laps, not comforting them for too long and not taking them to the toilet.

Significantly, in one workshop a male ECEC worker said that after many years of being physically reserved in his work with children, he asked himself whether such generalised suspicion actually did exist or only existed in his head. This illustrates the fact that educational staff – both men and women – certainly assume that male ECEC workers are generally suspected of being potential abusers although parents or colleagues have never expressed such suspicions and also do harbour them. Experience shows that ECEC centre administrators also

<sup>4</sup> As these surveys took place before the aforementioned public debates about sexual abuse in ECEC centres, they cannot tell us whether such debates would have influenced the way in which parents, ECEC administrators and ECEC provider programme directors answered the questions put to them.

<sup>5</sup> It must be said, however, that the surveys are very difficult to compare as they are very different in design.

<sup>6</sup> Percentage of those questioned who completely agreed that “employing men as ECEC workers for children under three years of age constitutes a risk” (Cremers/Krabel/Calmbach 2010, p.59).

consider the question of what reservations parents might have towards male ECEC workers before employing a man.

ECEC centre administrators often do not know whether or how to broach the subject of possible suspicions. It is also sometimes the case that ECEC centre administrators and female ECEC workers do not allow male trainees and ECEC workers to carry out certain care tasks that require physical contact with children, without actually referring directly to (potential) abuse. One male ECEC worker reported, for example, that female colleagues told him during an internship that he shouldn't take the children onto his lap during the time when parents were arriving to pick up their children, without giving him any further explanation as to why.

Such instructions often confuse, upset or annoy male ECEC workers. Accordingly, many male ECEC workers would like to see more open discussion of the existing, or non-existing, generalised suspicion. They would also like support in dealing with underlying or openly expressed suspicions. However, the surveys and workshops dealing with this subject also show that some men reject open discussion of this issue because they have not (yet) experienced such generalised suspicion in their practical experience at work.

What is more, reports by people working in the field have shown that ECEC centre administrators and ECEC workers have also been confronted by parents who very clearly state their mistrust of men, for example, by asking that male ECEC workers do not change nappies or even do not work in ECEC centres at all. Such cases require clear instructions in ECEC centres concerning how administrators and ECEC workers, both male and female, can react professionally in cases where concrete suspicions are expressed.

While in Germany individual and non-transparent strategies for dealing with this generalised suspicion have tended to dominate, in countries like the USA or New Zealand, such suspicions have led to instructions being issued telling male ECEC workers and to some extent also female ECEC workers to have as little physical contact as possible with the children. This is described in professional circles as the "no-touch policy" (see in detail Aigner/Rohrman 2012, p. 92f.). In New Zealand, two cases of child abuse at the beginning of the 1990s even led to a considerable reduction in the percentage of men working in ECEC centres there. Farquhar maintains that this was because, after the cases of abuse became known, many men avoided working in ECEC centres out of fear that they would be accused of being paedophiles (Farquhar 2012, p.405-414).

## **Sexual abuse in ECEC centres – an analysis of the current situation**

In the debate surrounding generalised suspicion of men, the question often arises of how common sexual abuse is in ECEC centres. This is not an easy question to answer. There is scarcely any empirical data available that might be able to provide evidence of the incidence and forms of sexual abuse in ECEC institutions in Germany.

It is only possible to gain an approximate idea of the extent of sexual abuse in the elementary education sector by looking at the results of the (few) studies that have examined the general occurrence of sexual abuse in Germany (e.g. Bange 2004; Wetzels 1997; Bienek et al. 2011), and in international studies (e.g. Andrews et al. 2001), as well as the few empirical studies on sexual abuse in German institutions that have been compiled to date (Helming et al. 2011). It also makes sense to include publications by advice centres and reports by those affected. In the most current and representative survey by the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony (KFN), 7% of women and 1.4% of men questioned stated that they had been victims of physical sexual abuse (Bienek et al. 2011, p. 19).<sup>7</sup>

As the number of those questioned who stated they had been victims of physical sexual abuse was a little higher (women: 8.6%, men: 2.8%) in one methodically comparable study by the KFN in 1992 (Wetzels 1997), Bienek et al. (2011, p. 41) conclude that sexual abuse in Germany is on the decline. They explain this decline, among other things, by the fact that potential perpetrators (male and female) must expect to be discovered more easily nowadays because the willingness of victims to report such crimes has risen considerably and preventive measures against sexual abuse have been more effective in the last years.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to recording how often sexual abuse against children occurs, some German and international surveys have also provided detailed information about the age of children who are victims of sexual abuse. According to these surveys, the percentage of those who suffered sexual abuse at pre-school age was between 8% and 14% (see Engfer 2004, p. 14). If this data shows a true picture, then children are particularly at risk when they finish ECEC education and start school.

### *Abusers (male and female)*

There is extensive agreement among professionals that children are mainly sexually abused by men. Engfer (2000, p. 34) puts the percentage of perpetrators who are male at 85-95%. In the KFN survey (Bienek et al.

<sup>7</sup> Exhibitionist acts and abuse without direct physical contact were not included here.

<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the survey has been criticised by experts from the consultancy sector, because the KFN did not take into consideration newer forms of sexual abuse, such as young children being confronted with pornography on the internet. In addition, acts of sexual violence were only included when an age difference of at least five years existed between victim and perpetrator.

2011, p. 30), the authors put the percentage of female abusers at 4.4% (“abuse with physical contact”) or 9.3% (in the category “other sexual acts”).

The authors of the academic research carried out for the coordinating office of the independent commissioner for child sex abuse (in the following simply referred to as “coordinating office”), which evaluated the telephone calls and letters received by the coordinating office, write that sexual abuse is committed in 87.6% of all cases by men and in 6.2% of cases by women and 6.2% by several male/female perpetrators (Fegert et al. 2011, p. 3). What is more, researchers into this matter came to the conclusion that the great majority of male and/or female perpetrators came from the children’s immediate social or family circle.

### *Where abuse takes place*

According to the KFN survey, most acts of sexual abuse take place in the home of the victim or the perpetrator and outdoors. By comparison, religious organisations, schools and children’s homes are only rarely named as the place where such crimes are perpetrated (see Bienek 2011, p. 35). Results of the survey carried out by the German youth welfare organisation ‘*Deutsches Jugendinstitut*’, entitled “Sexual Abuse of Girls and Boys in Institutions” (Helming et al. 2011), and the accompanying research by the coordinating office nevertheless makes clear that cases of sexual abuse in religious and educational facilities, in particular, children’s homes, schools and boarding schools, are not merely isolated cases and the authors are of the opinion that there is a great need for action to prevent sexual abuse from taking place in such environments (Bundschuh 2011, p. 9).

What is noticeable is that ECEC centres are mentioned only rarely as the location of such abuse. The initial results of the KFN survey show that of the cases of sexual abuse considered, “only” 0.6% took place in ECEC centres (see Bienek et al. 2011, p. 35). The accompanying academic research by the coordinating office also showed that there were “only few” reports of abuse in ECEC centres (see Fegert et al. 2011, p. 3).

The fact that these findings show that sexual abuse in ECEC centres is comparatively low must not, however, lead us to be complacent about this issue.

*Firstly*, there has been scarcely any qualified research into the ECEC centre as an institution to date.<sup>9</sup>

*Secondly*, professional institutions which deal with sexual abuse point out that consultancy meetings on abuse or suspected abuse actually do take place in ECEC centres. Accordingly, sexual abuse in ECEC centres is a topic that must be taken seriously, especially considering the fact that, when abuse happens in such facilities, several children are often the victims.

*Thirdly*, the possibility cannot be ruled out that forms of sexual abuse take place in ECEC centres that have not yet been recorded by the previous surveys, such as young children being confronted with pornography on the internet. There are cases of abuse in ECEC centres that come under these new forms of abuse, as the example of one employee at an ECEC centre run by the Protestant Church shows: he was accused of possessing child pornography and of taking nude photos of children at his place of work (Bundschuh 2011, p. 22).

*Fourthly*, it is logical that while ECEC centres might not be the actual scene of sexual abuse, they do act as places of contact for abusers. ECEC workers, interns or voluntary workers could use ECEC centres to get to know children and their parents and thus also come into contact with children outside of a centre itself, for example, by offering private babysitting services for parents.

*Fifthly*, the type of institution is not decisive in whether sexual abuse is more or less likely to take place there. But institutional structures can make sexual abuse easier or more difficult for perpetrators.

International research and reports from everyday work concerning this issue make clear that sexual abuse is not something that happens “by chance”, but is carried out by perpetrators who act in a targeted and strategic way. They deliberately seek out institutions where they presume that their abusive acts will not be discovered. As such, they look closely at the management structures and the working style in such institutions and, when planning their crime, check precisely what risks they face of being discovered and confronted within an institution. That is why transparent management structures and clear instructions at work provide a relatively high degree of safety, although there is no such thing as a failsafe recipe for completely preventing sexual abuse from taking place.

What strategies, measures and instruments are available to ECEC providers and centres when developing both a concept for dealing with generalised suspicion as well as a practically feasible protection concept for implementation in the facilities they work in? We provide some initial ideas in the following.

## **Practical strategies, measures and instruments for implementing a protection concept**

A protection concept in ECEC centres must include both a method for dealing with generalised suspicion of male ECEC workers, and a method for protecting children from sexual abuse in such centres. In the following

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<sup>9</sup> ECEC centres were also not included in the survey by the German youth welfare organisation “*Deutsches Jugendinstitut*” (Helming et al. 2011).

we first outline some building blocks for dealing with generalised suspicion and, after that, we introduce conceptual building blocks for protecting children from abuse.

### *Building blocks for a concept to deal with generalised suspicion of male ECEC workers*

In our opinion, when implementing a concept for dealing with generalised suspicion of men, a total of five fields of activity must be included. These are described in more detail below:

1. A stock-taking of the generalised suspicion specific to the each ECEC centre;
2. Clarity in dealing with physical contact and physical closeness;
3. Breaking down gender stereotypes;
4. Procedures following the expression of a lack of trust and (general) suspicion;
5. PR work and working with parents;

Taking stock of the generalised suspicion specific to the each ECEC centre

Reports from everyday work show that generalised suspicion has different effects in each ECEC centre depending on the individual approaches to the issue by those involved. That is why it is important to carry out centre-specific and thus team-specific analyses of this generalised suspicion. The following questions can serve as a basis for individual and team discussions between ECEC centre administrators and male/female ECEC workers to carry out a centre-specific analysis:

- Do male and female ECEC workers approach the issue of physical contact with children differently? If so, why?
- Are there certain activities requiring physical contact that are only be carried out by female ECEC workers? If so, why?
- Have the ECEC workers (male and female) ever had the feeling that parents suspect them of molesting, overstepping boundaries with or acting violently towards a child? If so, how did they react to this?
- Have male ECEC workers ever experienced, either during their training or in their everyday work to date, that parents or female colleagues wanted to stop them or prohibited them from carrying out certain activities that required physical contact? If so, how did they react to this?

An initial stock-taking concerning generalised suspicion and discussions about experiences and methods of dealing with (presumed) suspicions generally lead to a situation where ECEC workers (male and female) cite examples of how they have dealt individually with generalised suspicion and/or the strategies they have found to be successful in this respect. One male ECEC workers, for example, said he thought it was helpful to talk openly about fears of possible suspicions as early as the job interview stage. Such best practice examples should be developed as part of a team analysis.

In order to take up discussion of the issue with parents, a parent's evening could be used to discuss 'gender-aware educational methods', for example, also including discussion of the generalised suspicion.

Clarity in dealing with physical contact and physical closeness

Taking a closer look at generalised suspicion shows that, in particular (but not only) male ECEC workers are unsure of how much physical contact and physical closeness is appropriate when working with children, particularly with very young children. That is why it is important to emphasise from the outset that physical contact is fundamental, essential and vital for everyday interaction between children and adults in ECEC centres.

This first of all affects physical care tasks such as changing nappies, washing children, changing their clothes and going to the toilet. However, it also includes expressing emotions or affection and reacting to the children's emotional needs, for example, by cuddling, calming, comforting the children or nursing them to sleep.

Children do not recognise a separation of bodily awareness, physical contact, emotions and relationships. That is why it is perfectly natural for children to seek and need physical contact from those responsible for their education and care. As young children only gradually develop the ability to express their feelings and needs verbally and to understand others, they rely on adults to react to their bodily signals, but also need ECEC workers who are capable themselves of direct bodily communication. This applies to almost all adults with whom they have a close personal relationship.

In everyday encounters with children, however, it is not always easy to know what intensity of physical contact is desired for all of those involved. There must be an awareness and consideration of the possibility of crossing boundaries – no matter the gender of those involved.

ECEC centre teams might reflect on the subjects of physicality and physical boundaries by developing guidelines for dealing with physicality and establishing boundaries for physical contact and physical closeness. This can also be done with parents at a parents' evening. The following questions provide an introduction to reflecting on the issue:



- What physical contact is appropriate between children and adults and what is not? Where are the grey areas?
- How can pleasant and unpleasant closeness be differentiated? How do children show that (physical) closeness is unpleasant for them?
- In what situations do children overstep other children's (physical) boundaries?
- In what situations have I or my colleague (male or female) overstepped (physical) boundaries with children and/or colleagues? How did the children and/or ECEC workers react?
- How do I deal personally with boundaries and the overstepping of these?

#### Breaking down gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are a substantial factor in generalised suspicion towards men. In their view of the world, qualified ECEC workers and parents with traditional notions of gender still have difficulty accepting men as caring ECEC workers and carers of (young) children. This lack of understanding can feed generalised suspicion, as if to say; why else would men be interested in working in the ECEC sector? Gender-awareness education is therefore fundamental for the work in ECEC centres in general and for preventing a generalised suspicion of men in particular.

#### Procedures when mistrust and (generalised) suspicions have been expressed

As already explained earlier in this paper, media reports about cases of sexual abuse as well as the launch of the advisory council on sexual abuse have led to greater awareness and concrete measures in affected institutions. ECEC providers and centres therefore now have at their disposal various guidelines and recommendations for action to help them develop tailored procedures for responding to (generalised) suspicions (see Hölling et al. 2010; Conference of German Bishops 2010).

#### Public relations and work with parents

In the area of public relations, ECEC providers and centres should clarify which of the measures they have implemented as part of the first four fields of action they wish to communicate internally and/or externally (for example to parents). Focus should be placed on the following questions:

- Should the provider or ECEC centre be perceived externally as an institution that implements modules to deal with generalised suspicion?
- Should guidelines for dealing with physicality and setting boundaries in the ECEC centre be made clearly visible, for example, on posters?
- To what extent does the ECEC provider or centre want the centre to be perceived as an institution that focuses on gender equality or gender-awareness education in its work?

#### *Building blocks in a concept for protection against sexual abuse*

ECEC providers and centres, as well as other child and youth welfare facilities, generally have more experience of implementing a protection concept than they have of implementing a concept for dealing with generalised suspicions.

We believe the following fields of action are important when implementing a protection concept:

1. Measures for organisational and personnel development;
2. Drafting a concept for sex education;
3. Developing forms of participation and involvement for children, ECEC workers and parents;
4. Developing procedures for dealing with suspicion and/or concrete cases of sexual abuse;
5. Public relations and working with parents;

#### Measures for organisational and personnel development:

In the past years, professionals dealing with sexual abuse, in particular, the "Zartbitter" advisory service, have developed structured concepts for how institutions can protect children from sexual abuse (Enders 2010, Zartbitter 2010). Below, we outline the main recommendations for action which institutions can use to establish preventive structures by means of organisational and personnel development measures:

- Secure transfer of knowledge and information: ECEC providers and centres should make sure that their ECEC workers receive relevant information about sexual abuse at regular intervals. This includes, for example, information about the frequency of sexual abuse, strategies used by perpetrators and preventive measures. Within their structures, ECEC providers and centres can also appoint a protection officer who is responsible for ensuring that this is put into effect.

- Develop recruitment standards: when recruiting staff, ECEC providers and centres should not only require an extended police certificate of good conduct from applicants, but should also make clear that the facility takes the matter of protection from sexual abuse and overstepping boundaries very seriously. This signals to potential perpetrators (both male and female) that their conduct will be under constant scrutiny. Furthermore, ECEC providers can also include additional clauses in contracts of employment specifying, for example, that ECEC workers are not allowed to carry out private babysitting services for parents who have children in the centre (for more examples of potential auxiliary agreements or work instructions, see Kroll et al. 2003, p. 196ff.; Enders 2010, p.6).
- Set up a complaint management system: parents and children should be given the opportunity to inform an (external) person of trust about possible sexual abuse or cases where they feel certain boundaries have been overstepped. If possible, this person should not work directly in the centre itself (Hölling et al. 2010, p. 13f.).
- Establish a clear, transparent working culture and transparent, non-authoritarian hierarchical structures (see Enders 2010): clear structures can be recognised, among other things, by the fact that “there is absolute clarity about competences/areas of responsibility at all levels of the hierarchy and that the respective duties of the staff and the respective limits on their competences are communicated transparently, both internally and externally, to children, teenagers and young adults” (ibid. p. 24f.).

Developing a concept for sex education:

Sex education in practice, when it works well, gives children a positive self-image and a sense of self-esteem (Wanzeck-Sielert 2008). Promoting physical skills and fundamental body awareness, as well as developing a positive body image, all play an important role here (ibid.). ECEC workers can help children develop positive ways for dealing with physicality and sexuality, for example, by:

- creating learning situations in which the children can gain experience of sensuous and physical aspects;
- talking to the children about sexual issues such as masturbation or sex play instead of suppressing such matters as if they were shameful. The “Zartbitter” advisory centre, for example, advises that sex play (doctors-and-nurses) among children not be banned, recommending instead that certain rules of play be developed (Zartbitter 2009).

Ultimately, ECEC centres need a firmly established sexual education concept as well as the corresponding practical competences among ECEC workers that are based on reflections about their own sexual development and own sexual morals, as well as professional knowledge about the sexual and social development of children (Wanzeck-Sielert 2008).

Developing forms of participation and involvement for children, ECEC workers and parents:

In the professional discourse about prevention concepts in educational facilities, great emphasis is always placed on the fact that children and young people have a participation right. This is vital if children are to represent their own (safety) interests as equal and self-determined actors and if they are to learn that they can exercise their right to self-determination – including the right of self-determination over their own bodies. Enders rightly states that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the German Child and Youth Services Act give children the (fundamental) right to have a say in, to influence and to determine their own lives (Enders 2010, p. 2). As such, ECEC centres are legally bound to,

- inform children of their rights (e.g. in the form of images that convey the individual children’s rights visually);
- provide children with concrete forms of participation and let them have their say (the documentary “*Die Kinderstube der Demokratie. Partizipation in Kindertagesstätten*” provides a great many ideas in this respect, see MSGFJS 2006);
- entrust children with areas of responsibility and work out rules together with the children;
- give children space to express criticism and complaints.

In addition to this, ECEC providers and centres are called upon to regard parents as partners in the children’s education and they should be involved in designing the educational work. Hansen (2008), who has developed concepts for and implemented several model projects for participation in ECEC centres has noted that the participation of children also requires the participation of parents. This is because parents must also be able to support the rules negotiated in ECEC centres as well as the children’s right to self-determination.

It is clear that ECEC workers will want to and be able to allow children to participate only when they themselves experience first-hand the personality-forming aspect of democratic participation in their work (for example, by playing an active role in defining their conditions at work), and if they have the necessary methodological and teaching knowledge about how children (and parents) can become involved in designing the everyday work at the ECEC centre.

## Developing procedures for dealing with suspicion of and/or concrete cases of sexual abuse

As already described in “Procedures when mistrust and (generalised) suspicions have been expressed” above, ECEC providers and centres now have a variety of guidelines and recommendations for action at their disposal explaining how facilities should react in cases where there are signs that sexual abuse may have taken place. Concrete steps for action have been put forward, for example, by the German Conference of Bishops (2010) and the welfare association “Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband” (Hölling et al. 2010).

## Public relations and working with parents

In the area of public relations, ECEC providers and centres should clarify which of the implemented measures from the fields of action numbered one to four above they wish to communicate both internally and externally (for example, to parents). This clarification should focus on such questions as these:

- Does the ECEC provider or centre itself aim to be perceived from the outside as an institution that implements the modules of a protection concept?
- How can ECEC providers or centres communicate their ideas on and educational approaches to the subject of child protection to parents and an interested public?
- Should children’s rights in the ECEC centre be made clearly visible, for example, on posters?
- Should competences, responsibilities and hierarchies be made transparent and visible in the ECEC centre and/or externally?
- How can institutions deal professionally in their public relations work with cases of abuse or suspicions that have come to light?

## Conclusion and summary

The evidence presented shows that ECEC providers and ECEC teams are well advised to take a closer look at the subjects of generalised suspicion and sexual abuse so that they can develop professional methods for coping with these. Experience and research into generalised suspicion have shown on the one hand that male ECEC workers in early childhood centres are repeatedly confronted – whether explicitly said or not – with the notion that men are a risk factor in terms of the sexual abuse of children. This has a restrictive and long-lived effect not only on the work of male ECEC workers, but also on the work of ECEC centre administrators and female ECEC workers. ECEC providers and centres which employ male interns and ECEC workers (or want to do so) should support their personnel in dealing with generalised suspicion professionally and as a team.

On the other hand, information about the occurrence of sexual abuse shows that sexual abuse of children happens in ECEC centres, even if less so than in other educational facilities, and this is also not restricted to isolated events. Furthermore, ECEC workers, both male and female, must assume that a certain percentage of children in ECEC centres are or are potentially victims of sexual abuse outside the centres themselves. There is also a need for action in this respect in order to prevent and discover cases of sexual abuse in ECEC centres. ECEC providers and centres must train their ECEC workers to be aware of signs of sexual abuse of children by adults both inside and outside the centre so that they are in a position to take the necessary measures when there is actual suspicion.

ECEC centres which have a protection concept also protect their male employees from generalised suspicion at the same time, because the individual building blocks of a protection concept as introduced above, can be used by the team to establish professional educational practices, guidelines and procedures in their facility to work against such generalised suspicions. What is more, a protection concept provides ECEC centre administrators and ECEC workers, both male and female, with good arguments if parents should express general unfounded suspicions about a male colleague. In such cases, the ECEC centre management and the team can point out their protection concept and make clear that the ECEC provider and the centre itself have created an environment that prevents the sexual abuse of children in their facility to the greatest extent possible.

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# Diversity in teams: taking stock of the opportunities, team dynamics and possible lines of conflict

Michael Cremers & Jens Krabel

## Introduction

In the debate within the profession about quality standards in ECEC centres, it is becoming increasingly clear that team diversity, in which female and male educators with different cultural and professional backgrounds and biographies work together, is a real gain for a team's development and for its educational work. However, for this to become the norm, ECEC centre managers and educators must perceive this diversity within teams as a strength and recognise the role it plays a role in actively shaping teams. If we consider this in terms of 'broader inclusivity'<sup>1</sup>, it can be said that a conscious and considered diversity among the team of educators is not just beneficial for children and parents, but is in fact a necessity. Diverse teams can better meet the quality standards of ECEC centres and have a better awareness of, sensitivity to and support for children with diverse backgrounds, different inclinations, competences and interests; they can also more easily identify and deal with discrimination. What is more, having a diverse ECEC team can also improve cooperation with parents.

The current shortage of qualified educators in many regions of Germany provides an opportunity for ECEC centres to diversify. Heterogeneous and multi-professional ECEC teams, however, do not just develop out of thin air. Rather, ECEC providers and centres are called upon to develop and implement strategies that will attract new groups of people, such as people with a migration background<sup>2</sup>, men, male and female career changers from very different professions and academically qualified educators to work in ECEC centres. In addition, a consciously reflective attitude and (further) training is required among ECEC centre managers and teams so that heterogeneous teams really can put into practice the aforementioned quality expectation of better inclusion. Team diversity plays a decisive role in realising the quality expectation of 'inclusion in ECEC centres'.<sup>3</sup> There is unfortunately a lack of empirical knowledge on this subject which might be made use of. We at the "Men in ECEC Centres" Coordination Centre can bring examples of gender themes in everyday practical work in ECEC centres as this forms part of our work focus. However, to our mind, it is very important to go beyond gender to include other dimensions of heterogeneity. With our experiences in mind, we therefore attempt in the following to highlight links to other dimensions of heterogeneity in teams. We see this text as a support tool for dealing with heterogeneity in teams in cases where they have become more heterogeneous due to the recruitment of new groups of people.

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<sup>1</sup> When we talk about 'broader inclusivity' we are referring to the inclusion of plural aspects of diversity. Kersten Reich (2012) describes five necessary standards for inclusion in his book *Inklusion und Bildungsgerechtigkeit*: 1. Practising ethno-cultural fairness and reinforcing anti-racism 2. Creating gender equality and doing away with sexism 3. Allowing diversity of social life forms and preventing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation 4. Expanding equality of opportunity across socio-economic groups. 5. Creating equal opportunities for people with disabilities. In their article *Heterogenität als Grundbegriff inklusiver Pädagogik*, Frederike Heinzl and Annedore Prengel (2012) speak about the fact that "inclusive education is distinguished from all other educational approaches by the fact that it is fully committed to the model of the diverse learning group."

<sup>2</sup> The term migration background should take into consideration the influence that migration has on the living situation in Germany's majority society. The term bears the risk, however, of alienating or stereotyping certain groups in society. Furthermore, it is a term that often goes hand in hand with discreditation and discrimination.

<sup>3</sup> Written communication from the "Fachstelle Kinderwelten" as part of comments on this text.

## Reasons for forming diverse teams in ECEC centres

There are various reasons why ECEC providers and centres work to create diverse teams and attract new groups of people. Increasing the percentage of representatives of new groups like men, male and female immigrants, career changers and graduates in child education goes hand in hand with the increasingly wish for the educational staff in ECEC centres to reflect the diversity of their clientele (children and parents). The promise of better quality inherent in the debate about diversity in the profession can find a place in ECEC centres and enrich the everyday work there by integrating different life models and behaviours accompanied by the concomitant consideration. Diversity among educators increases the likelihood of reflection, by all those involved, about stereotypes and norms within society, such as a gender-based division of work assignments, or reinforcing stereotypical images of “men” or “women” or “immigrants” or “Germans”. If this process of self-critical reflection is successful, this also puts educators in a position to professionally implement inclusive educational practices in the broader sense, as described above. Another argument in favour of this is the increasing need for qualified educators and the chance this provides to diversify ECEC teams. People with a migration background, men, career changers and graduates in child education have been extremely underrepresented in ECEC centres up to now and it is hoped that they can, under certain circumstances, be attracted in greater numbers to the profession of educator. What is more, in the discourse taking place in the profession, there are additional arguments in favour of attracting people from new groups and more multi-professional teams; however, some of these refer only to specific groups. These arguments are briefly outlined in the following (see Cremers/Krabel/Calmbach 2010).

### *“More Men in ECEC Centres”*

Increasing the percentage of male educators goes hand in hand with a desire for more gender equality. More male educators in ECEC centres – it is assumed – could lead to a breakdown of outdated and obsolete ideas about men and gender, thus increasing levels of professionalism. One female ECEC centre manager interviewed as part of the “Male Educators in ECEC Centres” research project put it as follows:

“However unusual the encounter between a very young child and a man might be – with the adult as a kind of father substitute, you might say – it is an encounter where a great deal of physical contact can take place. So much loving care, so much affection. That is something that not all children and not all adults experience in their everyday lives. And seeing and experiencing that directly also makes it easier in my opinion to do away with entrenched ideas about stereotypical roles.” (see Cremers et al., p. 54)

In this context, it is vital for both male and female educators not to be forced into gender-stereotyped roles in the ECEC centres they work in and/or get stuck in such roles themselves. Rather, their individual competences and interests should be realised and promoted with by others and by themselves. Thus, male educators should not only be responsible for leading sports, craftsmanship or technical activities with the children. What is more, both male and female educators should be motivated to broaden the – also sometimes limited and gender-stereotyped – scope of their own activities. A mixed-gender team can help members look more critically at their own gender stereotypes and help raise awareness of gender-conforming behaviour and move beyond this.

### *Attracting people with a migration background*

One of the reasons why many ECEC centres increasingly want men and women with a migration background is that it is believed such team members can help make the centre more accessible for parents and children who themselves have a migration history. Thus, it is hoped that certain parents with a migration background will feel better represented and/or better understood in ECEC centres with educators with a migration background, and that barriers which make it difficult for them to participate in the everyday events at the centre can be broken down more easily in this way. The following summary of some points made by one ECEC centre manager show that employing educators with a migration background can certainly have such a positive effect:

It became very clear when we had a male Turkish trainee here. Many of the fathers with a Turkish background used the opportunity to come here and talk with him. The fact that he could speak and understand Turkish was just as important in this respect as the fact that he was a man. Of course the fathers were sometimes surprised when he contradicted them, speaking as a trainee from the perspective of the ECEC centre and a future professional educator. However, it was very clear that he had built bridges. (see Cremers et al., p. 55)

There is continued hope that educators with different language backgrounds can also support and respect children in their respective 'mother tongue'.

Another reason given for employing more people with a migration background is that well-functioning and well-integrated intercultural teams can act as role models "for the clientele, for external cooperation partners and for the social environment as successful examples of equal and productive intercultural work" (Gaitanides 2010, p. 153).

### *Attracting male and female career changers*

Those working in the area of elementary education who speak out in favour of opening up the way for more career changers to train as educators and work in ECEC centres generally quote the 'more team diversity' argument. Career changers, they say, bring in new competences and resources from their original training and practical work experience and from their wealth of experience in life, which benefit both the children and the staff at ECEC centres. What is more, these competences and resources can also be used as a unique feature in the ECEC centre's concept planning, depending on what professional experience, resources and competences are present. Until now, older people, however, have had a relatively difficult time starting a new career as an educator, partly because the three-year training period is unpaid. This is why an increasing number of part-time training courses with in-service training have recently been developed, where educators in training work in ECEC centres from the beginning of their training course and are paid. This should make it easier for people interested in changing careers to take up the profession of educator.

Nevertheless, such efforts are in their initial phases and practical experience has shown that both the training locations (workplace and college) and the career changers in question currently have a lot of structural problems to contend with and that these often affect the team dynamics in ECEC centres. In Berlin, for example, career changers are often included in the educator-to-child ratio figures, even though they are at the beginning of their training and still need to become familiar with their new work; this generally requires on-the-job training, but there is often no time for this, due to the already-overstressed educator-to-child ration in ECEC centres in Berlin (and elsewhere). In other German federal states, by comparison, career changers are not seen as regular members of staff, but



this also means that trainees are generally badly paid and career changers cannot live from what they earn.

### *ECEC educator as a university-level qualification*

For some time now, the discussions about multi-professional teams has included a demand for the profession of ECEC educator to be raised to a higher academic level and for ECEC centres to be paid more respect in society as institutes of education, and some progress has been made in moving towards that. There are now more than 90 courses of study at universities of applied sciences and other universities in the area of education and early childhood education in which graduate educators gain a qualification to work in the area of ECEC facilities. The result is that high school graduates qualified to enter higher education are increasing in importance as a target group, especially for management positions.

### *New groups of people – possible effects on team dynamics*

While some practical knowledge has been gained from work practices, there has been little empirical research into the concrete effects on ECEC teams of the (increased) employment of people with migration background, men, career changers and graduate educators. The German federal programme “More Men in ECEC Centres”, which was initiated in 2010, has provided a larger corpus of knowledge about possible team conflicts and dynamics in mixed-gender ECEC teams (see Cremers et al. 2012; Neubauer 2012). By comparison, there is little documented practical knowledge and research into intercultural team developments in ECEC centres (see Sulzer 2013). Even greater is the lack of research with respect to the two other new target groups – career changers and graduate educators – which is why we (must) try to apply knowledge about the possible team conflicts and dynamics that (may) arise in mixed-gender teams to other aspects of diversity.

Examples of some team dynamics and possible difficulties are described in the following; these (can) arise in particular in mixed-gender teams, but, we believe, are also to be expected in teams with other heterogeneity aspects.

### *Developments in mixed-gender teams*

The fact that male educators are rare in ECEC centres can lead to them having a special status, meaning that men in ECEC centres are often paid special attention. As such, experience gained in the ESF model programme “MORE Men in ECEC Centres” showed that while men were basically accepted and wanted in ECEC centres, closer inspection reveals that this acceptance is often only superficial. Men in ECEC centres are judged by different standards to their female colleagues, and their work and competence is often questioned. Their ‘special’ status merely has to do with the fact that gender stereotypes still have an effect in society, resulting in specific gender-based territories in institutions. If men encroach on territories that are traditionally seen as female, such as ECEC centres, this can lead to a situation where their female colleagues see those men’s work in a different, and therefore special, light than they would regard the work of a new female colleague. “Is he doing that right, can he do it right, will he manage it? Does he know how to cope with children? What if I ask him to plait a child’s hair, for example, will the result be a decent hairdo?”

It is seen as normal and natural for women to work in ECEC centres, and that is combined with the unquestioning assumption that often accompanies such notions, namely that new female colleagues are also able to competently complete stereotypical female tasks at work. When women begin work at an ECEC centre, they subject to less scrutiny than men. On closer inspection, the revealed diverse

nature of a 'purely female team' would reveal why, against the background of using aspects of diversity, a gender-based reflection is useful and beneficial not only for mixed-gender teams, but also for groups that are homogenous in terms of gender.

Another significant aspect of this special role of men in ECEC centres is that they introduce a 'novel' element into such centres, in contrast to the 'usual', or this is expected of them. Research on this subject has shown that male educators always prefer to lead sport and movement activities, and/or it is expected that they do so. They also engage more often in 'rough and tumble' with the children and are generally more willing to allow the children to engage in more risky behaviour than their female colleagues (see, among others, Aigner/Rohrmann 2012 and Cremers et al. 2010).

In addition, reports from actual experience as well as research show that ECEC managers and educators react to unusual and new working styles or activities in different ways and depending on the situation. Thus, one female ECEC centre manager told how a male educator, who was the only man working in her facility at the time of interview, had had the spontaneous idea on a hot summer's day of hosing the children down with a water hose. The children were enthusiastic about the activity and had a lot of fun. Two of the female educators, however, were troubled by the "wild" water games and as they also got wet, they complained to the centre manager. They motivating the children to splash each other with water as counterproductive to their function as role models. The ECEC manager subsequently brought up the topic at a team session, making sure, however, that the subject of "splashing with water" was not treated as a gender conflict, but as a professional educational matter. During the team discussion, it turned out that other female educators supported the male educator and his actions. Ultimately, the team even decided to anchor the subject of 'water splashing' in its concept plan. In this case, an activity that had been unusual for that particular ECEC centre and which was introduced by a man, led to an internal debate among the team members about goals and quality standards (see Cremers/Krabel 2012, p. 67f).

This stands in stark comparison to the interview statement from one male educator who said he allowed the children to take part in "wilder and more dangerous" activities such as climbing up high trees during his initial period of working at his ECEC centre. However, he soon learned that the (female) team felt very uneasy with this and so he stopped doing it. In the interview he said: "I would rather just avoid without some learning activities rather than rub someone up the wrong way." (ibid, p. 68).

The examples outlined here highlight potential areas of conflict that can occur when male educators are employed. The conflicts in these examples were solved in different ways, or not at all. They make clear that (apparently) *gender-typical working and communication styles* can become an issue in ECEC centres and these need to be dealt with professionally. This also includes both personal and team (self-)reflection on gender stereotypes, whether in a mixed-gender group or in a same-gender group.

Another important issue in connection with the special situation of men in ECEC centres is the *generalised suspicion* of men. This term refers to the fact that men in ECEC centres are suspected, again and again, of being potential child abusers. As the following quotes by two male trainee educators make clear, while male educators might deal in different ways with this generalised suspicion concerning abuse, it affects their work in one way or another.

“I had great difficulty at the beginning letting the children come close to me at all. (...) It was just that I was consciously worried and afraid that someone might interpret it in the wrong way.”

“When a child comes to me and wants a cuddle and I also feel like cuddling, then it’s not a problem for me, I just have a cuddle with them. Jumping to conclusions about sexual abuse is not okay of course. But it is a difficult and delicate issue.” (see Cremers/Krabel 2012, p. 71).

Generalised suspicion regarding abuse can lead trainee and qualified male educators to feel insecure and can restrict them in their everyday work. It is important for ECEC managers to seek direct dialogue with the men in such situations and speak with them together with the team about how generalised suspicion can be dealt with. However, surveys and reports from everyday work have shown that some men reject such open discussion of the subject as generalised suspicions have not (yet) played a role in their own work history. In view of the relevance of the subject, however, there is no way of avoiding closer examination of this issue (see chapter **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** in this publication).

What ultimately must be kept in mind is that the “MORE men in ECEC centres” hype also met with resistance. The public debate and the great interest at the present time in increasing the percentage of male educators can lead female educators, who have been doing a good job in ECEC centres for a long time, to feel offended and defensive. This applies not only specifically when male educators are actively sought and recruited, but also when employing men is justified by arguing that they can compensate for assumed deficits in the educational work of female educators as well as statements to the effect that men work more professionally in many ways, something that is expressed clearly in the following comments by a female trainee educator:

“And a man can perhaps contribute more new aspects than a woman. When I put it like that, I feel put down as a woman. It has always been a female profession and now the men are coming to make everything better. I mean, I’m not a hardcore feminist or anything like that. (...) But the idea that men can do things better really hits you in the guts. I am happy for any man to do his job, but it makes you think. (...). It’s not really talked about openly. I don’t always want to say that I’m jealous.” (Cremers/Krabel 2012, p. 69).

It is difficult to say whether feelings of offence and rivalry have become widespread among female educators because of the “MORE men in ECEC centres” debate. This partly has to do with the fact that female educators and trainee educators don’t necessarily find it easy to express these negative feelings. In ECEC centres, however, negative feelings of this kind can lead to tension and conflicts at work and these should be considered and dealt with.

### *The effects of different migration backgrounds*

Employing educators with a migration background can lead to conflicts and educational practices becoming ethnicised. Gaitanides, who works with intercultural teams of social workers, writes that, while intercultural teams that are well-integrated with one another act as role models, the way to achieving such teams is often a long and winding path. In his opinion, intercultural teams do not develop organically, but it involve “an intense and systematic learning process.” (Gaitanides 2010, p. 153). One element in this learning process, for example, is dealing with the *assignment of specific characteristics based on ethnicity*. Typical assignments of this kind often flare up, according to Gaitanides, when it comes to the question of the “correct” professional ratio of closeness and distance with the clientele. As such, non-migrants often accuse their migrant colleagues of being

“over familiar” with the clientele and of having difficulties maintaining the appropriate distance from the clientele, or accuse them of not sufficiently separating their private sphere from their work (see Gaitanides 2010, p. 157). To what extent such assignments can be transferred to the “ECEC centre” as a workplace, where relationships between educators and parents are generally “more informal”, is a matter for further examination.

It is possible, however, that the issue of “generalised suspicion” of men (see above) has special significance for some male educators with a migration background, if they are used to having a more “physical” relationship with children (and adults) and therefore tend to be more vulnerable to such generalised suspicion. This came to light in the words of one male educator with a migration background, who stated the following when we interviewed him as part of the research project “Male Educators in ECEC Centres” (Cremers et al. 2010):

“Since I have been working at the ECEC centre, I have been afraid of being suspected (of abuse). Where I come from, it is perfectly natural for men to have intense physical contact with children. We hug children and cuddle with them. But here? I am sometimes so afraid when the children come to me and want to cuddle. I believe children need that kind of physical contact, but because of my fears I keep my distance.”

On the other hand, social workers with a migration background accuse their (German) colleagues in conflict situations of being unable to understand certain positions or relationships because they are “Germans” or because they have a “typical German mentality”. “Such ‘killer phrases’ as these make an objective professional debate about controversial problem definitions and solution strategies difficult and exacerbate polarisation within the team in a counter-productive manner.” (Gaitanides 2010, p. 154).

Gaitanides suggests that such assignments along ethnic lines be identified in a joint process of team reflection. One possible way to begin such a process of reflection, he says, is to develop “alternative ways of interpreting” such assignments and, for example, to ask whether the closeness/distance conflict is possibly based on an intercultural misunderstanding. As such, the greater personal closeness that social workers with migration background have to their clientele can certainly be regarded as very professional, as the client might see “getting directly to the point” as tactless and impolite (Hofstede 1997 in Gaitanides 2010, p. 162f).

Educators with a migration background in ECEC centres must also expect to encounter discrimination that goes beyond ethnicised aspects. Discrimination can take the form of direct, hurtful insults and name-calling by parents, colleagues and children, or may occur more subtly when people are prohibited from wearing a Muslim headscarf, for example, or such people can find themselves excluded from meetings and decision-making processes. In general, educators with a migration background may be hurt by a lack of sensitivity towards discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion in the ECEC centre. Beber (2003), for example, describes the forms discriminating behaviour might take in ECEC centres. She writes about one educator who had problems with the fact that a Turkish colleague spoke Turkish with the Turkish parents: in her opinion, they should have learned German. She also writes about one educator who called a dark-skinned child “chocolate biscuit”. When confronted about this, she defended herself by saying she meant it affectionately, because everyone likes eating chocolate biscuits. And Beber also writes about parents who thought it was very good that the ECEC centre offered an English course, but rejected the idea of a Turkish-German morning circle. And of Arab parents who were accused of not

being interested enough in their child, because they never asked the educators about anything to do with their child other than the child's eating and sleeping habits. (see Beber 2003, p. 143)

It is likely that educators (male and female) with migration backgrounds feel that they are not respected enough in such ECEC centres and that it is difficult for them to feel at ease there and that such experiences lead them to leave such centres.

### *Career changers and graduate educators*

Until now, employees in ECEC centres have tended to be homogeneous and subject to little hierarchy. Differences in educational backgrounds (e.g. educator/childminder) have not been the subject of much discussion and often do not have much of an influence on the joint practical work when colleagues have worked together for a long time. This leads to a situation where staff have little experience in dealing with conflicts that might be caused by different educational backgrounds.

Employing career changers and graduate educators changes this situation, because the spectrum of previous experience and the diversity in levels of education is clearly broadened. This is a situation which educators and/or practical instructors may not be able to cope with. It is possible that career changers or graduate educators have more know-how or better competences and skills in certain areas than their colleagues. This might make working together on an equal footing more difficult.

This situation presents a particular challenge for ECEC centre teams, especially when educators feel that they are not seen as professional and respected colleagues in every aspect by graduate educators. On the other hand, both career changers and educators with a university degree often find their practical competence being questioned, because they have "insufficient practical experience" or "only theoretical knowledge". University graduates are also often accused of aiming for management positions – an accusation that is also often aimed at male educators. This is something we look at in more detail in the following.

To summarise, it can be said that different educational qualifications can have a considerable influence on team dynamics. Even if more diversity and/or multi-professional ECEC centre teams are basically seen in a positive light, it is clear that this involves challenges that have to be taken into consideration and reflected upon as part of the team and organisational development.

### *Diversity in teams: ideas for reflection*

Provider managers, professional consultancy offices and ECEC centre managers should be aware of the team conflicts and dynamics described here, which may become an issue in diverse ECEC teams, so that they can pick up on them and work through them accordingly. This is advisable, as such conflicts (can) make working together professionally more difficult. Taking into consideration the above, the following questions for the reflective process should help identify possible team dynamics and conflicts.

### *Does organisational and personnel development by the provider and the ECEC centre promote the creation of a diverse team and/or reflective cooperation within the diverse team?*

- Does your provider or your ECEC centre employ male educators/educators with a migration background, career changers or graduate educators? If so, in what percentage ratio?

- Does your provider and/or your ECEC centre pursue strategies and measures to increase the percentage of male educators, educators with a migration background, career changers or graduate educators?
- Do the provider managers and ECEC centre management signalise in their external communications (leaflets, website, etc.) or at parent's meetings that male educators, educators with a migration background, career changers and graduate educators are welcome in the ECEC centre? If so, what reasons were given for this?
- Are you suitably represented, recognised and supported in your ECEC centre? In what ways is this apparent?
- Does your ECEC provider have a contact point for educators who feel discriminated against because of their gender (this would also include the "generalised suspicion"), skin colour, ethnic origins, religious or ideological convictions, disability, age or sexual identity? If so, is it clear externally that this contact point is responsible for all employees and for all forms of discrimination in equal measure?
- Does your provider or ECEC centre provide working groups in which the educators (can) talk about/learn more about diversity aspects?
- Does your ECEC provider or centre have an anti-discrimination officer?

*Do diverse team dynamics and/or conflicts influence the educational work and/or cooperation with parents?*

- Are there educators in the team who are, either openly or "secretly", against recruiting educators with a migration background, male educators, career changers or graduate educators? If so, what arguments are used and how are these dealt with?
- Is there a climate of open discussion at the ECEC centre that allows educators to express their misgivings about educators with a migration background, male educators, career changers or graduate educators? Do educators who are of another opinion have the chance to speak out against such misgivings?
- Does the prevailing opinion in the ECEC centre tend to be that all educators are "equal", and that it is personality that matters, or does the idea prevail that diversity aspects influence both the personality of the educators and the educational work?
- Is the educational work and the work with parents allocated differently between male and female educators and/or between educators with and without a migration background? If so, did the team deliberately choose this allocation of work activities or did such differences "creep in" (unnoticed)?
- In the event that such differences in the allocation of work activities occur, are the ECEC manager and educators happy with this situation?
- Are there excluding or generalising assignments or statements in the team, such as the following: "Africans or Europeans or Germans are such and such" / "That's because you grew up in the (communist) GDR" / "That is typically male or typically female" / "Graduate educators are stuck-up and arrogant" / "Older career changers don't like to be told what to do"?
- If exclusive or discriminatory statements are expressed in the team, how do the educators react; what arguments do they put forward? Are such statements made as part of internal team discussions?

- Do educators, parents or children act in a discriminatory, disrespectful or derogatory manner? If so, how do those affected react? Do they receive support from the team? Do they receive support from the ECEC provider?
- Have there already been conflicts in the ECEC centre in connection with the diversity aspect? If so, how did the team deal with these conflicts?

*Does generalised suspicion of men in ECEC centres influence the practical educational work?*

- Do male and female educators perhaps approach the issue of physical contact with children differently? If so, why?
- Are there certain activities requiring physical contact that are only carried out by female educators? If so, why?
- Have the male educators ever had the feeling that parents suspect them of molesting, overstepping boundaries with or acting violently towards a child? If so, how did they react to this?
- Have male educators ever experienced, either during their training or in their everyday work, parents or colleagues wanting to stop them or prohibit them from carrying out certain activities that require physical contact? If so, how did they react to this?
- Are there clear instructions specifying how ECEC centre managers or educators should react when parents (or other educators) want to prevent male educators from carrying out certain activities requiring physical contact? If not, what might such joint rules of discussion and conduct look like?
- Can parents insist under certain circumstances that their children are not cared for by, or do not have their nappies changed or similar by a male educator? Are there clear rules for this in the ECEC centre?
- Is it possible to discuss such questions in the team or with parents?

We see the above aid to reflection as a support tool for dealing with diversity in the team in the event that the team has become more diverse due to the recruitment of new groups of people. Furthermore, we do not regard the above aid to reflection as a closed and finished instrument. It is our intention to further develop this aid to reflection in future. We would therefore welcome every report we receive of practical experiences from everyday work and every suggestion for additions or improvements to the questions reflected upon here.

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