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ErzieherIn. Preschool teaching staff in German gender equality policy

ABSTRACT. The aim of the article was to analyse the policy of gender equality in Germany, here centered around the specifics of the function of (fe)male preschool teachers, which at its source was a profession directed exclusively at women, and as a result is now feminised. These circumstances, unchanged for almost 200 years, have their roots in disregard towards this professional group in the political discourse, apparent in it being treated as "invisible". Current governmental policies aim at supporting the employment of men at the preschool educational level. The article analyses the federal government's gender policy through the prism of centrally supported model projects implemented in Germany since 2010, taking into account the broad context of preconditions. General issues present in social debates (such as gender) have been linked in this article to the specifics of a particular professional group of *ErzieherIn*, such as the rise of the rank of early care and education combined with serious staff shortages hindering the implementation of political guidelines. As a result, these two groups of conditions intertwine, forming a very interesting image, in which tradition gives way to contemporary social expectations.

KEYWORDS: preschool teacher, feminisation, gender equality policy, preschools

Introduction

Preschool teachers (*ErzieherIn*) are part of professional teaching staff predominantly identified with the educational work at preschool institutions. Hence, the formerly used colloquial professional term of *KindergärtnerIn* (female preschool teacher). In 1967, men were granted formal permission to work in the profession. The scope of employment opportunities for this professional group was also expanded and professional qualifications valid to this day were defined. After the required

2–3 years of professional training in the socio-pedagogical sector at the level of higher education, female and male preschool teachers can now be employed not only at preschools or nurseries, but also in school clubs, as well as work with adolescents, which significantly expands the scope of professional activity. Due to the low ratio of male preschool teachers, only a female denomination: *Erzieherin*is used in Germany, even though preschool teachers are currently one of the most sought after professional groups. In 2016, as many as 107,000 jobs were not filled¹. It is also a professional group which is not obliged to further professional development and falls into a group of lower-status occupations. In 2018, 417,475 preschool teachers were employed in Germany, only 5.2% being male (StatistischesBundesamt, 2018).

In Germany, teachers in possession of state qualifications (Staatlich anerkante Erzieher) are part of teaching staff. This is not the only professional group performing educational functions at preschool institutions. Pedagogical staff can also mean social educators with state qualifications (Staatlich anerkante Sozialpaedagogen), or state-approved child carers (*Kinderpfleger*). This position is present in some German states, such as Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia. It is sometimes referred to as social assistant. Childminders can work with children from infancy until the end of primary school, i.e. up to the age of approx. 10. Staff employed in early care facilities are usually people who have obtained qualifications at vocational schools (Fachschulen). An important step towards professionalisation of the ErzieherIn profession would be to incorporate vocational training courses into university education system for preschool employees known as "Childs pedagogues" (Kindhetspädagoge), as a response to the demand for highquality preschool staff.

The aim of the article is to draw attention to the policy of gender equality in Germany, here focused on the specificity of the profession of preschool teachers, which at its source was a profession directed exclusively at women, and which is feminised to this day. The debate around gender equality in relation to this professional group, long present in German-speaking traditions and achievements of Friedrich Wilhelm Fröbel, a German educator, theoretician and leading creator of preschool education, seems extremely interesting. It focuses on both

¹ [Online] Available from: https://www.azubify.de/ausbildungsberufe/erzieher/ [Accessed: 1th July 2018].

general issues present in social debates (gender), but also on the specifics concerning the particular professional group of *ErzieherIn*, such as the increase of the rank of early care and education not only within academic circles, but above all within state educational policies, as well as serious staff shortages, seriously impeding the implementation of political guidelines. As a result, these two currents of both political and social debates have been overlapping, creating a very interesting image in which tradition gives way to contemporary social expectations. As a result, the profession of preschool teacher is opening up to male candidates and every year there are more and more male employees.

The profession of preschool teacher. Traces of history

Institutions for young children, formed at the turn of the 17th and 19th centuries, were part of social welfare system. This tradition survived in Germany until the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, when preschool institutions were included in the education system. However, there was a serious turn towards the educational situation of preschool children after the publication of the the PISA results in 2000, unfavourable for Germany, which initiated a social educational debate (the so-called "PISA-shock") and began a still ongoing reform processin all areas of the education system. This phenomenon also encompassed preschool institutions, with particular regard to issues related to teaching staff, to the extraction of the forgotten and stereotypical gender roles, including social behavioural patterns or rights and obligations considered appropriate in preschool work. There was loud talk about the problem of horizontal segregation and social acceptance of preschool teachers being solely females. The policy of equal opportunities for men and women was in this case directed at the former, focusing on ensuring equal access and equal participation of both genders in preschool teaching.

It is worth recalling that the emergence and the development of a profession related to care and upbringing of non-school children was closely linked to the first women's movements in Germany. It was supposed to be a kind of educational opportunity for women, enabling them to obtain qualifications in the profession and, as a consequence, paid employment, a luxury hardly obtainable for women at that time. In this way, women could gain financial independence, which was also an

attribute of emancipation (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2013, p. 91). In shaping the profession of preschool teacher, researchers of this period point to the accompanying social arguments. Employment of women in childcare institutions was interpreted as their natural duty, with motherly feelings obliging women to take up the role of childminder (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 198–199). Therefore, women were "perceived as not career-oriented, highly valuing family life and not paying attention to status or prestige" (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2013, p. 91).

Wilma Aden-Grossmann draws attention to two arguments in favour of the value and legitimacy of women taking up work at preschool and early-school education institutions. First of all, it was argued that the profession was basically the same as female nature, their duties as mothers, and thus belonged to women. In this way, in line with "the ideal of a mother-woman, it did not question the dominant views on femininity and was not a threat of masculinisation" (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2013, p. 91). Secondly, the need for paid employment was discussed in the context of the possible financial security of women, defining their independence, resulting not only from their marital status, but also, which in this period particularly concerned widows, allowed families to maintain decent living conditions (Aden-Grossmann, 2011, p. 198–199). Due to the intensified women's movements, certain institutions were created to enable the education of women who wanted to work with children who, due to their age, were not yet subject to compulsory education. The approach to the functions of pre-school institutions also changed, in which "storing" children gradually began to give way to their education and required reaching beyond the very "female nature". In a short time, the following were created:

- In 1837, Theodor Fliedner was the first to teach preschool female candidates 2–3 month courses in Kaiserswerth, from 1854 they were extended to one year.
- In 1847, Friedrich Fröbel—founder of the first "kindergarten" established an educational institution for preschool teachers.
- In 1872, in Leipzig—the first seminar for preschool teachers (das erste Seminar für Kindergärtnerinnen) was created by Henriette Goldschmidt, later transformed into the Freblow school for women (Fröbel-Frauenschule).
- In 1873, Henriette Schrader-Breymann, Frebel's niece and student, created a so-called House of Frebel and Pestalozzi in Berlin, in which future preschool employees were educated.

 In 1893, an association called 'Girls' and women's social assistance group' (Mädchen- und Frauen gruppen für soziale Hilfsarbeit) was established in Berlin, which initially offered annual courses for preschool teachers.

The prerequisites for candidates in the profession of preschool teacher (Kindergartnerinnenbildung) were very general and defined the following: minimum age, secondary education—for example, a college diploma for girls—a CV, health certificate and payment of tuition. In this case, gender was important, because the specifics of the expectations were in full extent consistent with the then recognised "natural" predispositions of women. The training courses lasted one year and covered both theoretical and practical subjects, such as: Pedagogy, Anthropology, Religion, History, foreign languages, Drawing and Singing. Seminars were offered as a form of support for preschool teachers. It is worth noting that completing the courses did not limit their graduates to public education of young children, but they could also obtain employment in private homes of middle-class families (Gary, 1995, p. 88 and more). Preschool teachers, according to Fröbel's concept, understood their functions broader than just being carers supervising children's physiological functions, but as educational experts who organised childfriendly education. At that time, a new scope of duties was combined in the triad of didactics, upbringing and care. Creating preschools as educational institutions required different preparation of the staff (Derschau, 1987, p. 67–81). The creation of this new understanding of the profession began, unfortunately, due to the difficult social situation of the profession which was limited as a typically female occupation.

Diversity management—new state policy

Among the many problems currently raised in the arena of German education policy, the issue of staff and the quality of services provided as part of pre-school education occupies one of key positions. Within this spectrum, the issue of gender equality was opened to the political sector as one of the alternatives to improving the difficult staffing situation at preschool institutions. It is worth adding that candidates from other countries encouraged to work in German preschools constitute a similar alternative. Although this is not so clearly justified in the political discourse, the coincidence of the dates of the initiatives introduced and the

inclusion of the issue of employment of men at preschools along with the "package" of other important issues requiring immediate attention, such as serious employment shortages, does not seem accidental. We may suppose that in the employment policy for the early care and education sector, gender issues were not taken seriously until after the educational crisis recognised by politicians and the need for corrective initiatives. This opened the debate on gender equality with regard to the German preschool sector, which is an important area of the adopted diversity management policy. As a result, federal authorities have made it one of their priorities to overcome the existing hierarchical two-gender classification (Pfau-Effinger, 2005) (*zweigeschlechtlichen Klassifizierens*) (Andresen, Dölling, Kimmerle, 2003, p. 33).

Among pressing problems that require immediate attention in the preschool area were the issues of ensuring that children in early care and education facilities have contact with gender-diverse teaching staff. One of the arguments was that children spending most of their day at preschool, separated from mothers and fathers, have the right to establish relationships with teachers who are at the same time a type of authority and models conveying appropriate male models which are as important as female. A similar position is presented by entities responsible for running institutions, as well as their employees and parents.² They clearly emphasise the need to increase the number of men employed at preschools and even in nurseries (for 0–3 year-olds).

For several years, the number of men choosing the profession of preschool teacher has increased significantly compared to previous years, and this trend has continued until now. In Germany, in 2016 there were a total of 27,144 active male teachers and apprentices employed at the preschool level³, which represents 5% of all employees. This means an increase of another 0.3 percentage points, i.e. by 2,177 more men were employed compared to 2015(The reports of the Bertelsmann Foundation, 2008). An interesting phenomenon is also the process of selection of workplaces by men who most often choose those institutions where the teaching staff is heterogeneous. At this point, we may ask ourselves

² Questionnaires implemented for the ESF-Modellprogramm (*More men in preschools*) programme run by the "Eltern-Kind" initiative in Augsburg.

³ In the case of preschool teachers, it is possible in Germany to take up employment while pursuing vocational training. Then it is the position of trainee for which remuneration is secured.

whether the choice of a given facility and the value assigned to it are determined by the "masculinity of its employees" (Bourdieu, 2002).

Preschool is still feminised. Women predominate in nurseries, preschools or mixed facilities. The number of male pedagogical staff employed at the preschool level, however, shows a very different picture in individual federal states. Disproportions range from 10.9% in Hamburg, 8.9% in Bremen or 9.6% in Berlin, where almost every tenth pedagogical employee is male, to federal states, such as Bayaria, where the number of men preschool teachers is negligible and amounts to mere 2.9%⁴. For example, in 2008⁵, out of 47.711 employees representing the total number of teaching staff employed in early care and education institutions in Bayaria (0-6 years of age), only 720 employees were men. In addition, a large proportion (10%) were employed in common rooms. Researchers indicate that this diversity is significantly felt in practice: in Berlin, at least one man is employed in each early care and education institution, while in Bayaria, where the demand for the male part of the teaching staff is the largest, only 16.1% of institutions employ male teachers (Statistik der Kinder und tätigen Personen in Tageseinrichtungen, 2016).

Table 1. Preschool	and managing s	staff with ger	ider differentiation	—figures from	2006
		and 2018	}		

_	Male	Female	In total	Male	Female	In total	
Bun-	Male	remaie	III totai	Male	remale	III totai	
desland	Numerical data			Percentage data			
2018							
BW	4.570	87.862	92.432	4,9	95,1	100	
BY	4.343	92.518	96.861	4,5	95,5	100	
BE	3.367	27.178	30.545	11,0	89,0	100	
BB	1.647	19.358	21.005	7,8	92,2	100	
НВ	474	4.485	4.959	9,6	90,4	100	
НН	1.799	13.527	15.326	11,7	88,3	100	

⁴ Ministerium fürSoziales, Integration und GleichStellung Mecklenburg Vorpommern, Neue Ausbildung: "Staatlichanerkannte/r Erzieher/in für 0- bis 10-Jährige" [Online] Available from: https://www.regierung-mv.de/Landesregierung/sm/Familie/Kindertagesf %C3%B6rderung/Kita-Ausbildung-Fachkraft-Kindertageseinrichtungen/ [Accessed: 1st July 2018].

⁵ Data collected by Forschungsdatenzentrum der Laender im Amt fuer Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, Statistik der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe.

Bun-	Male	Female	In total	Male	Female	In total	
desland	Numerical data			Percentage data			
2018							
HE	4.012	46.010	50.022	8,0	92,0	100	
MW	776	11.717	12.493	6,2	93,8	100	
Ni	3.342	52.583	55.925	6,0	94,0	100	
NW	5.665	108.896	114.561	4,9	95,1	100	
RP	1.634	29.895	31.529	5,2	94,8	100	
SL	334	6.271	6.605	5,1	94,9	100	
SN	2.752	31.854	34.606	8,0	92,0	100	
ST	1.016	17.507	18.523	5,5	94,5	100	
SH	1.712	18.336	20.048	8,5	91,5	100	
ТН	781	14.432	15.213	5,1	94,9	100	
Germany	38.224	582.429	620.653	6,2	93,8	100	
2006							
BW	1.093	45.262	46.355	2,4	97,6	100	
BY	744	44.048	44.792	1,7	98,3	100	
BE	993	14.994	15.987	6,2	93,8	100	
BB	194	12.336	12.530	1,5	98,5	100	
НВ	316	3.013	3.329	9,5	90,5	100	
НН	659	7.622	8.281	8,0	92,0	100	
HE	1.396	28.623	30.019	4,7	95,3	100	
MV	105	7.963	8.068	1,3	98,7	100	
Ni	986	29.611	30.597	3,2	96,8	100	
NW	2.773	71.184	73.957	3,7	96,3	100	
RP	535	18.909	19.444	2,8	97,2	100	
SL	105	4.005	4.110	2,6	97,4	100	
SN	334	20.607	20.941	1,6	98,4	100	
ST	116	12.704	12.820	0,9	99,1	100	
SH	564	10.666	11.230	5,0	95,0	100	
TH	93	10.218	10.311	0,9	99,1	100	
Germany	11.006	341.765	352.771	3,1	96,9	100	
Differentiation 2006–2018							
Germany	+27.218	+240.664	+267.882	+247,3	+70,4	+75,9	

Source: I. Nowosad, K. Tomasik-Abdelsamie, (own study based on:) German Statistical Office, Statistisches Bundesamt: Statistiken der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe, 2006 und 2018. (in:) Fachkräftebarometer Frühe Bildung 2019, Deutsches Jugendinstitut, München 2019.

Projects supporting the employment of men atpreschoolinstitutions

Many questions were asked in the forum of socio-educational debates. For example: What role does gender play at preschools? "Genderfriendly preschools"—what exactly does this slogan mean? How can gender equality be translated into teaching practice? How can the teaching staff, but also administration: managerial bodies and supervisory institutions, as well as other entities responsible for the quality of preschool education, develop the gender equality policy? How can preschools consciously and honestly implement the idea of equal opportunities for men and women, without a stereotypical approach to gender? How can the implementation of this idea enrich everyone? In 2010, these questions and the accompanying disputes led to the establishment of the "MEHR Männer in Kitas" (Budrach, 2012) initiative by the federal government, as a coordinating body for 16 model projects financed by the European Social Fund, which were planned for the next three years and implemented in 14 federal states. After the end of this project in 2013, another federal initiative promoting a specific movement for gender equality policy in both pre-school and nursery institutions in all federal states was opened⁶.

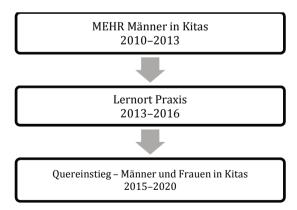


Figure 1. Federal projects supporting the employment of men at preschool institutions Source: I. Nowosad, K. Tomasik-Abdelsamie, own study.

⁶ These are projects targeted at the group of children aged 0–6 and institutions providing care for them, defined as institutions for early education, upbringing and care.

The first of the nationwide projects was "MEHR Männer in Kitas", evidently focused on increasing the recruitment of men. In social promotion, eight areas of activity were highlighted as being particularly important in both the social campaign and the checking/analysis of factors favouring the employment of men at preschool institutions, or and even more broadly at early education and care facilities (0–6 years of age). The areas exposed by the government were also the subject of informational publications and leaflets about the implemented project, such as⁷:

- gender-oriented professional orientation, including activities promoting preschool teaching as a profession also for men, i.e. convincing young men to join preschool teams (Jungen und M\u00e4nner f\u00fcr den Erzieherberuf gewinnen);
- promotion of volunteering on the part of both men and women—
 "Federal volunteering, voluntary year of social work and school internships";
- shaping social gender sensitivity, especially in relation to the profession of preschool teacher and, as a result, an increase in the number of men employed at preschools (MEHR Männer in Kitas);
- promoting gender-oriented activities organised by preschool institutions under the slogan "Various preschool activities for fathers";
- promotion (information campaign) by preschool institutions in which men were employed;
- protection against the so-called "general suspicion" as creating safe working conditions for the male part of the teaching staff;
- development of gender diversity taking into account gender in the employment of preschool teaching and management staff;
- implementation of improvement courses: gender-sensitive pedagogy and publications on 'gender-specific pedagogical work in preschools'.

Lernort Praxis was another nationwide program. A project focused on the development of processes changing daily learning practices implemented in the years 2013–2016. Within this framework, the Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) allocated eight million euros to support 76 projects in seven federal states (Berlin, Hamburg, Hessen, Lower Saxony, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein). The funds were used to guarantee (and pay for) an

⁷ Analysen, Erfahrungen und Strategien [Online] Available from: https://mika.koordi nation-maennerinkitas.de/unsere-themen/praxis-handreichungen/ [Accessed: 4th November 2019].

additional number of positions for mentors to facilitate the implementation of the main project assumptions. Mentors, together with heads of particular institutions were trained and prepared to achieve the project's objectives. The program was implemented in a total of 170 institutions that embarked on the introduction of three priorities: strengthening qualifications, especially in the area of practical activities and instructional concepts (*Qualifizierung im Bereich Praxisanleitung und Anleitungskonzeptionen*); strengthening cooperation between educational establishments (*Verstärkung der Kooperation der Lernorte*); unblocking and linking underrepresented groups of people as qualified employees (*Erschließung und Bindung bisher unterrepräsentierter Personengruppen als Fachkräfte*). In this case, a third of the priorities indicated could be related to the increase in the number of male jobs in preschools.

In 2015, another federal initiative was undertaken to increase the social attractiveness of the profession and was directed at recruiting people who were thinking of changing their career. It was recognised that professional areas related to the education system, including preschool, are a huge challenge for middle-aged people who want to change jobs. The results of research conducted for the use of the project revealed the following justifications:

- retraining takes a long time,
- no remuneration is received during retraining,
- the conditions for receiving a state subsidy for training are not determined individually and it is often unobtainable,
- financing of loan-based qualification courses/training is associated with a high risk of subsequent debt.

It is no wonder then that most people, despite initial interest in working in pre-school settings, quit and look for work in other sectors. The emphasised value of the project is to facilitate the acquisition of qualifications along with the implementation of paid work. i.e. maintaining income continuity and not interrupting it during education. Thus, the project implements another important idea of lifelong learning.⁸ As part of the project "Quereinstieg—Männer und Frauen in Kitas (2015–2020)", which can be translated here as "Side entrance—men and women in daycare centres (2015–2020)", 16 up to 20 "project points" oriented at

⁸ Analysen, Erfahrungen und Strategien. [Online] Available from: https://mika.koordi nation-maennerinkitas.de/unsere-themen/praxis-handreichungen/ [Accessed: 4th November 2019].

recruiting interested parties interested in changing their profession were to be created in all federal states from March 2015⁹. It is worth adding that the continuing coordination office "MEHR Männer in Kitas" accompanies this program both in scientific and practical dimensions (Ibidem). The aim of the "Quereinstieg—Männer und Frauen in Kitas" program is therefore to implement adult-friendly, part-time education enabling the acquisition of state qualifications to practice the profession while receiving a salary. This model enablesremuneration for internships completed during retraining. This way of delivering education is already bringing some results as statistics confirm the increase in the number of male pedagogical staff at the preschool educational level.



Figure 2. Students of the first year ofteachers school with gender differentiation in $2017\mbox{-}2018$ (in %)

Source: Koordinationsstelle "Männer in Kitas"10

⁹ BMFSFJ secures funds from the European Social Fund of 33,8 mln EUR in total, cf.: Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, ESF-Bundesmodellprogramm Quereinstieg—Männer und Frauen in Kitas. Kurzinformation, Stand: November 2014, p. 6. [Online] Available from: https://www.esf-bw.de/esf/fileadmin/user_upload/Foerderperiode_2014-2020/Der_ESF_FP_2014-20/Der_ESF_auf_Bundesebene/Kurzinformation_ESF-Bundesmodellprogramm_Quereinstieg.pdf [Accessed: 1st September 2019].

¹⁰ See source: [Online] Available from: https://mika.koordination-maennerinkitas.de/forschung/maenneranteil-bundeslaender/ [Accessed: 1th July 2019].

Summary

An interesting thesis put forward by Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik that "it was not the feminisation of the teaching profession which brought about his degradation, but the feminisation was a consequence of the loss of attractiveness by this profession" (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2013, p. 86), seems to be absolutely justified in relation to its situation in German preschools. The statistical dominance of women is a testimony to the historically low prestige of the job in the professional structure of the market, which was inscribed in its constitution as a continuation of women's home chores. However, it is also the result of regarding this professional group in political discourse as "invisible" for the next 200 years. As a result, for social and economic reasons, no increase in prestige was possible and the gender division was maintained. Working in the profession was expected to be full of maternal feelings, but was not seen as an achievement; was to replace mothers, but not to be career-oriented. Qualifications for the profession were interpreted as "given by mature" and not acquired in the education process (Pasternack, Keil, 2013).

Among the professions that developed in parallel with the profession of preschool teachers and had a similar genesis, were occupations of social worker and primary school teacher (*Wohlfahrtspflegerin or Fürsorgerin. Volksschullehrerin*). However, their feminisation had its reasonable limits (Ebert, 2006, p. 76). Nonetheless, despite the still existing statistical dominance of women, there is an interesting upward trend in the number of men choosing to work at preschools and at daycare centres. This process is reinforced by the academic support for the profession, but not only. Also, the re-discovery of the rank of childhood supported by neurophysiology (Hüther, 2008) and psychology (Dornes, 1997), could no longer be ignored by politicians (Köster, Balluseck, 2008).

Significant changes adopted all over Germany, recognising the education of children in preschools, were approved by the 1991 Child and Youth Care Act. Undoubtedly, pre-school education was already of great importance at that time. However, translating this into everyday practice was implemented by individual federal states very differently and at a different pace. The discourse on the quality of preschool institutions only began in the first decade of the new century as a reaction to the results of PISA research. The debate on gender equality and the re-

quirement to implement new processes and methods ensuring equal opportunities for the development of girls and boys also made its mark. It is indeed about being able to experience differences as an enriching, rather than hindering process. In preschool teachers' work, this basically has meant an increase in the importance of the requirement for competence in coping with heterogeneity, which has not only changed vocational training programmes, but has also opened preschool facilities to the need to employ male staff as well. In Germany, this process has gained undisputed political support since 2010 and draws attention to the search for and verification of the effectiveness of their new forms of implementation in the *ErzieherIn* profession and gender equality policies.

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