

Focal point:
**the German educational system in search of its prodigal sons –
work with boys in the FRG**

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This academic paper attempts to give a brief overview of the development of work with boys in the Federal Republic of Germany and its conceptual approaches. This work is understood as an introduction to the subject and provides an initial point of reference. The history of work with boys is characterized by several debates among the workers with boys themselves as well as among male and female educationalists and academics. The intention is to give appropriate consideration to and to describe the deferred historical development of creative processes in youth welfare services and the school. A great deal has been written about today's boys in recent years. Relevant newspapers, magazines and social and educational research have discovered boys and have frequently depicted them as victims of contemporary society. Research conducted at the beginning of the 21st century shows that more girls than boys now finish their education with a high-school diploma and considerably more boys than girls leave school without any qualifications. A similar situation applies to illness, drug abuse, convictions and suicide attempts. The list is long. However, this cannot under any circumstances be considered as the sole rationale for working with boys, as will be shown below.

This study is divided into the following sections:

1. The historical development of education for boys in Germany
2. Objectives and contents of gender-specific approaches in school and other institutions (a case in point is Munich, the capital of the Bavarian region)
3. Gender-specific aspects of primary school teacher training
4. Range of leisure possibilities available for boys aged 4 – 12 years of age
5. Boys from socially disadvantaged classes and from a family of migrants are the new losers in the educational system

6. Trends, development tendencies and boy-oriented measures

Suggestions for further independent study of the topic

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1. The historical development of education for boys in Germany

The development of work with boys until today

A conscious approach to work with boys began in the first half of the 1980s. It grew out of an academic reaction to the steadily growing socio-educational work focusing on girls and pressure coming from women personally committed to promoting gender-specific education. It was also shaped by discussions on gender relations in the Federal Republic of Germany that were further enriched by experiences from the Netherlands and Great-Britain. Initially, conceptual approaches to work with boys mainly concentrated on boys' shortcomings (an „anti-sexist approach“), i.e. „criticisms of boys' shortcomings“ (their sexist and violent behavior or demeaning attitude). The local primary school in Frille, Northern Germany was one of the first educational institutions in Germany to offer well-planned educational projects specifically geared to boys under the supervision of welfare services for boys and schools. At the same time, there were small groups of teachers who were working hard to meet the claims and expectations of feminists which also had a definite impact on work with boys. Nevertheless, they were working more or less in the dark without any specific theory or model and often their work did not receive any recognition from their colleagues.

In the late 1980s, some educators criticized the fact that youth work was apparently only carried out in order to support work with girls. This was the beginning of work with boys which became an area in its own right and the development of specific concepts in this area. This phase was subsequently characterized by the thinking that the purpose of educational work with boys was to broaden the definition of a male's role. Considerable progress was made in work with boys thanks to the parallel gay rights movement in Germany and the open questioning of images of masculinity handed down as well as societal attitudes toward sexuality. This took place against the backdrop of the suppression of women and the conservative distribution of roles, i.e. in family and professional life. Nowadays, gender equality has become a clearly defined target. Targeted emancipatory work in boys' groups has been a priority since that time.

The subsequent phase was shaped by a focus on boys' shortcomings as the starting point for work with boys. This means that not only do boys make problems, but they also have some. In other words, they make problems, because they have some. The greater tendency

for boys towards violence was cited as one example of this. This allocation of concerns or allocation of shortcomings was the consequence of the attempt to come to terms with their own sexual identity. At first, only very slowly this thinking had an impact on individual reflections and the educational practice. There was a new realization that not only did masculinity cause problems for girls and women, but that boys and men themselves had problems with their own masculinity. Focus was then shifted to gender-specific issues and the first boys and men's centers were established.

Today, work with boys is characterized by the realization that boys and men have the possibility of developing and living out their own personal identity. They do not have to hold onto patriarchal images of masculinity or ascribed, stereotypical male roles. Moreover, a traditional image of masculinity can lead to an awareness that the role makes too many demands on boys as they can not always live up to expectations. In any case, for a large number of boys, women are the exclusive role models: female nursery school teachers, female primary school teachers and mothers at home. As fathers are often more intensely involved in their jobs and there are many single mothers, boys have more female role models than male role models in everyday life. For this reason, male youth workers have an important role to play, giving boys opportunities, outside of every day coeducational interactions, to reflect about their own identity and masculinity and to speak about emotions, feelings etc.

In this way, they can also gain confidence about their strengths, which is important for the development of a positive self-image. At the same time, it is also important to see that there is a wealth of alternative life plans open to men. Males should have the chance to experiment and evaluate their own limits. Problems such as male violence should also be addressed. In sum, there is a whole range of different life plans available to forge an individual's identity, going beyond merely taking on traditional male and female qualities. In this process, gender identity shifts to the background and in the search for identity, personality characteristics, aptitudes and skills occupy at least as important a role. Therefore, work with boys involves seeing positive as well as negative role alternatives for boys and men. Boys are asked about how they see themselves, their anxieties and the opportunities they see in terms of the development of their personal identity and how they would like to develop. Because over a short time period, boys are exposed to a multitude of life plans, they are often dependent on guidance in their identity search. The aim is thus to provide the basis for a conscious and autonomous development of a life plan that is oriented towards the individual resources of boys. It is nevertheless important for the multipliers of work with boys to take a stand, e.g. by criticising unfair gender relationships and male dominance, based on their own life plans, standards and values as well as on processes of reflection and change and a constructive

relationship with boys with a view to assisting them in their own development. Boys should ultimately experience equitable co-existence of the genders as desirable. It is obvious that the presence of men is required as role models in this case and that this presence is of particular importance for an approach that is based on identity awareness in the work with boys.

The „gender perspective“ became a basic norm for working with children and boys in the 1990s. The gender concept works on the assumption that it should not be confined to the distinction between „sex“ and hence biological gender. In our society, cultural, social „gender“ has a considerable impact on the distribution/allocation of roles between the genders. Gender here is understood as something that is experienced, assumed or initiated. The term „doing gender“ sums up this understanding, namely gender as a feature that is manufactured by society and culture, which is continually produced and confirmed in everyday acts. This is associated with the issue of a gender democracy which should also be increasingly achieved through a policy of equality for example.

A vast array of methods for working with boys has since been developed, which are not only designed for work in the short term. There appears to be a growing demand for the application in practical educational work. The gender mainstreaming programme in working with boys has also become an independent and essential task of educational work. Many organisations responsible for the provision of child and youth welfare services have already incorporated gender-specific education and gender mainstreaming standards in their policy. Gender specific work was embodied in child and youth welfare legislation in Germany in the mid-nineties as a remit of child and youth welfare services. A more recent approach insists that working with girls and boys must not be confined to gender-homogeneous consideration and work. Attempts must instead be made, through insistence on gender-homogeneous approaches, to enable the subject matter and results of educational work on the development of gender relationships to enter into the joint search by girls and boys for ways and means, by calling for equality of status and acceptance between girls and boys. The objective of this work is not only for girls and boys to address their own identity issues, it is also to enable them to strive for a gender democracy of their own accord.

Work with boys in practice nowadays

A huge number of conferences has since taken place in the area of work with boys and various institutions (e.g. mannigfaltig – Institut für Jungen- und Männerarbeit) to train and provide further training to qualified personnel to focus on working with boys .have been established. In addition, educationalists frequently meet and consult in study groups in order to consider their actions or dealings with boys. Work with boys now forms an integral part of

many areas of child and youth welfare services, e.g. in family welfare services, juvenile court assistance, advice centres, educational social work, public youth work, etc. Spring 2005 saw the start of the national pilot project „Neue Wege für Jungs“ („New Ways for Boys“), whose work is initially restricted to three years. Umbrella organisations for working with boys are located in North Rhine-Westphalia (*LAG Jungenarbeit NRW*) und in Lower Saxony (*LAG Jungenarbeit Niedersachsen*) for example. The „Zeitschrift für Männer und Jungenarbeit – Switchboard“ („Journal of Work with Men and Boys – Switchboard“) makes a significant contribution to the debate in and around work with boys.

School and work with boys

Since the conscious and considered approach to boys is invariably understood and implemented as educational work, the „school“ system is an idea location for this gender-specific approach to educational work. History reveals that the inclusion of working with boys and its associated concepts into the school system was a gradual process. The reason for this may have been or may be that it was not permissible to question the important academic principle of coeducation – an achievement from the 60s – in a self-critical manner. Even in teacher training and further training institutes there was – if at all – only a very sporadic gender-conscious reappraisal of the situation in schools (e.g. the adult education centre in Frille, Steinkimmen youth centre). The first signs of change in teacher training courses appeared at a few German colleges and universities in the mid-90s. They mostly came about through the personal commitment of individual college staff. There was an increasing need to research social gender relationships („gender debate“) and to make the findings available for implementation in schools. The results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the IGLU- und PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) study revealed a distinct need to include gender-equitable educational approaches in schools as well. The idea of introducing differentiating coeducation in accordance with needs and target groups was introduced into the discussion in order to improve the balance of the concerns and educational opportunities for boys (and girls). The existing findings from the theory and practice of youth welfare services were an important factor in the creative process aimed at improving the coordination of content and calibre of the work with boys in schools.

The first concepts and projects were then increasingly implemented in the area of secondary school – also in the sixth form occasionally – again, where the subject areas of sex education, prevention of violence and gender-specific role identity were addressed. Attempts were simultaneously made by (a few) schools – e.g. the Kerschensteinschule (secondary school) in Frankfurt am Main, the Laborschule (pilot school) in Bielefeld or the Peter-Petersen primary school in Berlin-Neukölln – to differentiate lessons in a gender-specific manner in some cases, to better adapt learning, in particular of girls in science subjects to

their particular needs. The development is completely different in the primary school area. Gender-specific approaches to lessons have only been implemented sporadically. Since teaching staff in the FRG are almost exclusively feminine (86.7% of all primary school teachers in school year 2005/06, Federal Statistical Office Germany), but work with boys that is based on identity awareness requires reflective men, a (staffing) dilemma has arisen or arises in terms of the approach to the work. The attitude was simultaneously adopted that reflective educational work in adolescence is of more importance for the emotional and social development of the personality of girls and boys and is hence of secondary importance for the participants. This analysis was not confirmed by new findings in educational, gender and cultural sciences during the last decade and referred to the early relevant gender-forming experiences in the socialisation process of boys and girls. The results of the PIRLS and PISA study then increasingly fuelled a debate in society and the primary school which focused more sharply on the genders and their opportunities in the school and educational system.

The support aspect, clarification of gender-specific conditions for socialisation and the debate that was started about the opportunities and limitations of female teaching staff in terms of working with boys or the effect that this relationship has on the performance of boys in primary school produced the first results. It revealed that boys are the current „losers“ in our educational system (criteria: social affiliation / ethnic origin / secondary school qualifications). Strategies, concepts and responses to this situation are being developed but are also dependent on the commitment of individuals. The method of designing a more gender-equitable primary school is still in its infancy in the FRG. Successful projects show that cooperation by and networking of schools, parents and youth welfare work are productive for all participants and aid in negotiating the initial substantive and staffing hurdles. It is evident from these experiences that primary school – if it does not wish to confine its educational scope to the transfer of knowledge, and wishes to encourage the personality development and social skills of its „stakeholders“ as well – must position its educational scope or remit more precisely with a view to making better use of the existing resources and conditions for learning.

2. Objectives and contents of gender-specific approaches in school and other institutions (a case in point is Munich, the capital of the Bavarian region)

1. Fundamental educational attitude

Gender-specific work with boys is not understood as a method in this context, it is an *approach* and takes a *specific view* of male children and young people.

- It takes the development of identity and the impact of society on gender relationships into consideration.
- Work with individual boys is emancipatory, empathic, respectful and holistic.
- It broadens the scope of action and ideas vis-à-vis hierarchical or restrictive ideas about gender relationships.
- It advocates absolute equality of the sexes, sexual identities, sexual orientations, of different cultures and also of people with a disability.
- It takes account of the different situations of ethnic minorities, as well as of disabled boys and young men.
- It cooperates closely with work with girls.
- Work with boys assesses the special needs, competences and strengths of boys.
- Boys play an active part in organising the range of activities available.
- Educationalists act as role models for boys in terms of potential approaches to „manhood and womanhood“.
- They must critically assess their personal acts in terms of their own gender role and gender relationship.
- The educationalist manages the preferences of boys carefully and responsibly.
- The self-image of men in working with boys is based on partiality, i.e. the adoption of the perspectives of boys and support of education work that is appropriate for boys.

2. Themes

Themes that will be addressed in particular include:

Feelings, relationships, masculinity (in different cultural contexts), conflicts, violence, power, privileged or deprived background, being a victim, physicality, sexuality, disability, health, addictions and/or life planning

3. Goals

1. Overarching goals

- Offer guidance to all persons involved in educational activities for boys
- Take political action to further gender democracy and promote equality between heterosexual and homosexual partnerships (the elimination of dominance behavior)
- Take into account individual circumstances and needs in all areas working with boys and structure this work on the basis of goal-oriented action

2. Action-oriented goals

- Respect boys' differences and encourage their personal development
- Keep communication channels open and encourage self-expression

- Encourage an awareness of feelings, capabilities and one's own body
- Know and respect one's own limits and those of others
- Identify hurtful, violent, racist and sexist attitudes, point them out and actively do something about them through initiatives for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and working with juvenile offenders
- Stimulate and reinforce acceptance, tolerance, interest and curiosity for the difference conceptions of masculinity
- Promote self-reliance and responsibility for others in social interactions
- Offer shelter for boys
- Initiate preventive measures against abuse
- Support boys in victim situations
- Encourage and enable boys to do repetitive housework
- Make initiatives for boys interesting and relevant and tailored to the world they live in
- Youth educators should be present as role models and be dynamic
- Support boys in their development stages

3. Gender-specific aspects of primary school teacher training

Gender-specific components have only been recently introduced in primary school teacher training programs for the Federal Republic of Germany. Since the mid-nineties, thanks to the personal commitment of a handful of professors and university lecturers, gender pedagogy has become a viable addition to the training program for prospective teachers.

Gender-specific, longitudinal cross-section studies such as Scholastik (1997), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study international reading study (PIRLS) carried out in 2003 and the Program for International Student Assessment study (PISA) conducted in 2000, 2003 and 2006 have also promoted an awareness of the importance and effectiveness of other teaching methodology. Moreover, community discussions with specialists in recent years on the role of schools (i.e. for selection of the better students or focus on remedial work for the weaker students?), debate over the introduction of an all-day school concept, the future of the three-track school system as well as the implementation of the gender mainstreaming criteria in the area of education for the introduction of new gender-specific didactic approaches. Initial and in-service teacher training programs today:

- Have shifted focus from pedagogy and the school's cultural environment to reflective co-education,
- Focus on an appreciation for gender-specific differences in terms of development of achievement-oriented behavior, individual learning concepts, knowledge about

gender construction etc. to achieve a gender-specific syllabus more precisely tailored to a given target group.

- Focus on strengthening the reflected development of an individual.

The goal is that reflective teaching practice should be part of cross-curriculum lessons offered by the school and an integral part of school development.

4. Range of leisure possibilities available for boys aged 4 – 12 years of age

Interest in working with boys has grown qualitatively and quantitatively in the Federal Republic of Germany. In fact, in recent years the range of opportunities for working with boys has considerably broadened. Fifteen years ago, boys were viewed more under the angle of potential delinquents one had to be suspicious of and consequently the gender-specific resources available to them went more in the direction of addressing their personal shortcomings.

Today, working with boys has taken on a broader and resource-oriented approach. On the one hand, it has become increasingly clear that boys need, in a different way, encouragement and support in the gender-related learning and child development process. On the other hand, gender research shows the negative consequences for boys (and men) for taking on traditional roles without reflection. One consequence, among others, is this situation has restricted their possibilities for personal social development and barely left any room for them to develop their own individuality based on personal experiences. This insight process continues to guide the educational components of working with boys.

Health care is a major priority area for work with boys involving the areas of:

- Drugs
- Violence (both the victim and the perpetrator) and limits
- Coping (physically and emotionally)
- The association of risk-taking behavior with masculinity
- Sexuality
- Sports
- Media

Initiatives have also focused on experience pedagogy, life and career planning as well as the development of communicative competence.

5. Boys from socially disadvantaged classes and from immigrant families: are the new 'losers' in the educational system

Since the 1960s, in Germany, the expression, educationally disadvantaged and its various manifestations, have been described by the well-known expression of „Black-Forest Catholic, working girl“. Consequently, in recent decades, gender-specific research was primarily focused on girls and their disadvantage in the school system. Boys tended to be brought up in discussions of educational policy when it came to the question of aggression and violence in kindergartens schools and schools.

A review of the breakdown of graduates shows that girls have caught up to boys, and have even surpassed them. At all levels of education, girls perform better and also have a better track record with the *Abitur* (high school leaving examination). The proportion of girls in the last year of high school in Baden-Württemberg amounts to 53%. In comparison, the percentage of boys at the ‚Hauptschule‘ (modern secondary school) amounts to 56%. Boys are the „losers“ in today’s school system. They are overrepresented in the category of pupils repeating a year (i.e. 5.1% boys compared to 3.4% girls for the ‚Realschule‘ (academic high school), school drop-outs, special needs pupils (63% for boys, 37% for girls) or also among children out of school.

The PISA study also points out that boys do less well than girls in school. They clearly lag behind in reading skills which are so important for success in other areas of learning. According to the PISA Study, boys are one-half of a competence level behind girls. Not only do girls read better than boys, but they are also more enthusiastic about reading. Compared with other countries, a much higher proportion of boys in Germany say they „do not like reading“. In fact, 55% of the boys in Germany, indicate that they do not enjoy reading at all as compared to only 29% of the girls. Already in the first „reading phase“ between eight and thirteen years of age, boys prefer computers and other electronic devices to books. Reading motivation, however, has a strong influence on reading performance.

Risk factors: being a male and social background

On the overall, 30% of the boys can keep up with girls. In fact, boys who come from educated and successful families do as well as girls in school and there is a higher proportion of boys in the highest performing percentile than girls. This indicates that parents and their support play an important role in the school success of their children. The large influence of social background on school success concluded by the PISA study has more of an effect on boys from socially deprived backgrounds and from immigrant families is even more significant than the overall difference between boys and girls. We can gain more insights into educational discrimination today through „Turkish working class boys from the big city.“

Among the educational losers are boys from families who have migrated to Germany, settled here more recently but also German boys from socio-economic categories of parents with low education backgrounds

One thing is clear: we can not afford to have educational losers and should not allow this.

Then boys are not dumber, but these pupils

- stay far below their potential
- they are not challenged enough to develop in areas they are potentially good at
- can not find traineeship placements, their integration in the world of work fails
- have difficulties integrating in society. (Study of German Boys Institute): „The less successful the transition from school to a job is, the more this is seen as discrimination. Furthermore, this leads to a higher probability of withdrawing to the ethnic group, and a greater danger of disintegration“.
- have (partially) experienced failure giving them a failure mentality, a negative self-image and they are at a loss for finding suitable male role models in today's society.
- have a greater danger of getting involved in violence and falling into criminal circles.

Reasons for the lower school achievement of boys

Research on poor school performance especially about boys from immigrant families is only in its infancy stages. With 34% of its pupils from immigrant families, Baden-Württemberg for one, has an interest in carefully researching an explanation for this. Again and again, primary school teachers stress that boys develop later than girls. For this reason, the practice in Germany where the school a pupil will attend after leaving primary school is determined at an early age, has a negative effect on boys. Scholarly literature also increasingly refers to the growing representation of women in the teaching profession. In the years that are crucial for the development of gender identity, there are hardly any male role models in kindergarten, primary school and secondary school that boys can look up to orientate themselves. This shortage seems to very negatively affect pupils from immigrant families, as in their homes the male role model tends towards male dominance and the submission of women. It is also believed that today, the media is disseminating images of masculinity connected with coolness, toughness, technical competence and dominant behavior. Boys from socially deprived families are especially receptive to such models that are incompatible with school requirements for work discipline, the ability to exert efforts and the acquisition of wide-ranging factual knowledge in different subjects. On the other hand, it was pointed out that co-educational schools are completely girl-oriented, rewarding the types of behavior girls are taught, while, however, „punishing“ specifically boy behavior.

Boys lag behind by over a year

Only one third of boys in schools perform as well as girls. The others can not keep up with them and are also hindered because of their macho role. „Not only do boys make problems, but they also have a number of problems“, said Sielert (2002). Boys are more involved in bullying, they lack a role model, and many of them get bad grades, indicated a professor teaching social pedagogy with specialization on sexual and gender pedagogy at the University of Kiel. Are boys thus treated less favorably?

An increasing number of boys fail in school. The first national educational report of June 2006, documents that two thirds of all school drop-outs and three fourths of all special needs pupils are males. They comprise the main part of ‚school refusers‘, pupils who have to repeat a year or who display behavioral problems. They are also overrepresented in the secondary modern school, but by the time it comes to their secondary-school leaving examination, their numbers have dropped, whereas 56% of secondary school graduates are females. Unfortunately, women in the work world have not yet been able to make full advantage of their educational edge.

In view of such figures, sex educationist Sielert, said that schools must better address the needs of boys. Also more men need to be recruited as teachers in order to provide role models for learning how to cope with strengths but also weaknesses. Because the „assertive culture of the virility culture“ should never again have to go through the back door, said Sielert (2002).

At the same time, boys are over-proportionately represented in the highest group. The PISA findings show that more boys than girls are at risk in the four core skill areas: German, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry (12% compared to 9.7 girls). However, at the other end of the scale, more boys than girls have a high level of competence in all four core skill areas on the overall. According to Cornelißen (2006), the Director of the Department of gender research and female policies at the German Youth Institute in Munich: „There is a higher proportion of boys at the top of the class and equally a higher proportion among school dropouts“. Sielert (2002) also confirmed that 20 to 30% of boys perform as well as the best female students: „Schools are quite boy-friendly for male pupils who come from educated families.“

In Germany, there is a considerable gap between the students at the top and those at the bottom. And for boys who have difficulties in learning, their path is an especially painful one, as rather than encouraging the poor performing students, the German school system weeds them out. They start school late, repeat classes and are directed towards less demanding schools. A pupil who ends up at the lowest level (special-needs school), often ends up

leaving school without any qualifications. Unfortunately, there are many that fall into this category. A closer analysis of data pertaining to school failure is revealing: The number of school drop-outs among German pupils is indeed high at 9.5 percent. However, another figure gives cause for alarm: nearly one fourth (19.7%) of boys from immigrant families leave school without any qualifications. In other words, the risk for this group is twice as high. Also the school drop-out rate for non-German girls which lies at 12.9% is higher than for German boys. Moreover, there are differences among the pupils coming from immigrant families: according to educational reports, young people from Turkey clearly do not fare as well as any other group.

A reason for the comparatively poor performance of boys from immigrant families is the above average representation of many immigrant families in Germany in lower social classes. The PISA study points out a close relation between social background and good grades in Germany. Therefore, they run up against a school system where, from the beginning, they are at a disadvantage. This situation is compounded by linguistic problems and difficulties in finding a balance between two different worlds.

Youth researcher Cornelißen also sees the problem as one of role models. Many boys from immigrant families still grow up with traditional images of masculinity where the men are elevated to the level of heroes and patriarchs. These old macho-patterns are however in a crisis. Jobs for low-skilled or non-qualified workers are disappearing nowadays in the traditionally male areas such as industry and construction. Moreover, that ideal does not fit in everyday school life today that is in the hands of female teachers. Female teachers account for 70% of the teaching staff with even 83% in the primary school. Many male pupils do not cope well in this situation.

Ideally, it would be good to have teachers from migration backgrounds who understand the problems of boys from similar backgrounds, as sooner or later conflicts are bound to arise if for example a male pupil questions the authority of a female teacher. Sielert (2002): „Boys tend more to be brought up to deal with their problems out in the open and to resist authority.“ On top of that, the other, modern image of masculinity which boys from educated families fall into, is not open to them. What is meant here is the flexible ‚New Economy‘ career-goer with technical know-how that is not held back by his shortcomings. This image of masculinity that grooms boys for competition and performance, does not go well with the teaching profession. Is this the reason why fewer men want to become teachers?

Cornelißen (2006) warns: „We should not encourage an image of male dominance. It must be possible for girls as well as boys to develop a broad range of skills than previously

allowed by society“. Just like girls on *Girls' Day*, can learn about technical trades, boys should get a chance to find out about and learn social occupations to be more sensitive to persons in need of care. Sielert (2002) does not mean at all that now girls should be neglected: „Girls from disadvantaged families often have similar problems as boys, however they have a greater capacity to adapt. That is why they are more successful at school“.

Whereas boys are still better at mathematics, physics and chemistry, 15-year old girls viewed in international terms are on the average one year ahead of boys. The gap is even higher in Germany as boys here do not like to read as much as their peers in other countries. Reading is however one of the basic, key skills in the knowledge society. According to Cornelißen, school performance is increasingly tied to language capability. This is another reason why many boys fail.

One of the reasons why boys are behind when it comes to reading, is because of reading motivation. For that reason, Elstner in charge of child and youth work at the municipality library in Leipzig, wanted more efforts to be made to boost reading interest of boys. Science fiction, Kerouac's cult books as well as pop literature in the style of Stuckrad-Barre and Beigbender should have a place in school libraries and in teaching. In addition, comics, non-fiction and autobiographies of musicians, hackers and athletes should be commonly used in classes. Cornelißen and Sielert are calling for reflexive co-education. This means, that girls and boys for example are taught certain subjects separately such as physics or German in which the performance according to gender, are far apart. Or in remedial classes. As low male achievers learn better with traditional images of masculinity, when no girls are present. What is important is that this image of masculinity does not have to go through any proving.

The gender educator Sielert also recommends that schools „de-schoolize“. What is meant here is that schools should become much more receptive to practical activities. „Schools today are very much academic institutions. Very little of what is important to children find important is taught in schools. It is not enough for students to spend most of the day sitting still. In fact, there is a need for more activities with movement and social interaction“ (Sielert 2002). For this reason, therefore, as more learning is being shifted outside school as projects, practical and project work are gaining in importance. Perhaps this will encourage more men to take up the teaching profession.

6. Trends, development tendencies and boy-oriented measures

1. Boys need male role models in kindergartens and schools

The target of gaining more male educators and teachers in primary and secondary schools could be achieved through better pay and training for the teaching profession, such as a reform of teacher training with common training programs for all teachers this would enable an exchange of teaching staff among the different kinds of schools. Through a reform of the compensation system which strives for the same starting pay for all teachers rather the present system of unequal pay dependent on type of school, the teaching profession could become more attractive for ,younger students‘.

Special campaigns should target for example school graduates, students and offers for students changing fields, so that migrants can be won over for the teaching profession. Migrants (such as technical workers and skilled laborers) are to be appointed to assist with the professional integration of all pupils from general educational schools and vocational schools. In the all day school structure, care should be taken to see that a relevant proportion of male teaching staff should be appointed. This also applies to boys supervisors of youth programs. Male migrants (but also females) should be gained as boys supervisions. If, in addition to teaching staff, additional experts would work at the school, above all, boys would benefit. Therefore, for example in light of the shortage of trained PE teachers, recent PE teacher trainee graduates such as male coaches could be appointed to primary school.

2. Promote reading for boys through better choice of reading material

In order to encourage reading skills among boys, above all, boys must be motivated to read; Boys have different reading interests than girls. For this reason, they need other ,reading‘ material which must be made available at the school library and in classrooms (exciting stories about football etc.). As in many families (i.e.) through pre-reading, only the mother reads and in schools, above all the female teacher reads, boys need male transmitters of literature or to have programs or activities involving male writers, journalists, but also athletes under the motto, ,reading with boys‘

3. Equal treatment to ensure that the promotion of girls and boys, as an ongoing mandate of the school becomes a school principle.

Examples from other countries show that equal treatment as a mandate, leads to an improvement in school achievement as well as the school atmosphere. In Baden-Württemberg, a series of positive measures for equal treatment which were also initiated by the rural Institute for school development or by the rural foundation, but for example in the outside evaluation, there were schools that made efforts to promote boys and girls which were not evaluated and rated in this area.

4. Whoever wants to better support boys, must teach differently

With better individual support, the education of boys and girls are more appropriate, boys and girls benefit from project-based lessons, boys are best supported by practical learning and learning activities outside of school. With two classroom teachers (one female teacher and one male teacher), the individual needs of boys and girls at least, for specific age groups can be addressed, as also the corresponding role models set an example.

5. Reflected co-education is also beneficial for boys

Occasional gender-based separation of boys from girls for individual subjects or projects for certain grades (e.g. physics, home economics, school newspaper) are also measures for supporting boys and helping them in their search for their role.

6. Boys days at all schools

In parallel to „*girls days*“ whereby girls gain insights into ‚typical male occupations‘, „*Boys days*“ are also organized to give boys the opportunity to gain exposure to so-called female jobs in health care, education and socio-educational jobs and to overcome the classical division of roles in the occupational world.

7. Additional support for schools with a high proportion of pupils whose families have migrated

Schools need a more optimal utilization of resources in order to permit the formation of smaller learning groups and to be able to use additional learning support teachers. With school social workers, boys can be better supported during activities outside the classroom. Regional resources are essential to widely extend this initiative.

Gender-mainstreaming in schools

Gender mainstreaming means that boys are helped as effectively as girls to perform well in school. But it also means that the gender-specific disadvantages of girls are also targeted and addressed early on. Lesson contents and the teaching culture must focus on both boys and girls and their role-specific requirements. Practical examples drawn from the real world involve physics for girls, as well as early age experiments such as a children’s university). Moreover, the topic of gender equality crosses over different disciplines. Job discrimination can be well-targeted through new working time models such as part time jobs for female engineers, a right to all-day childcare for one year olds and up and an increase in the numbers of all-day schools as well as an affirmative action quota systems and programs for the advancement of females.

Conclusion

Work with boys is now underway in a wide range of areas. Its slow beginnings on a narrow path are already far in the past. Nevertheless, as in many areas, work with boys is still involved in the search for identity, it seems that the final way has not yet been found. Again and again, it is important to point out that successful work with boys is only possible, if gender mainstreaming is also planned and put into practice. The desire is that additional projects be established and in that way high-quality educational work for and with boys can be ensured. The hope remains that gender-oriented work is still more consciously extended to all areas of educational work and becomes a self-evident part of educational work.

Suggestions for further independent study of the topic

1. How are boys (and girls) perceived of in their own work situation?
2. Is there an (unconscious) preference for one of the sexes?
3. In which areas of social competence or learning do boys need assistance?
4. Is there also the possibility in co-educational settings to guide gender promotion also in a co-educational setting?
5. Where do networks in their professional environments exist which can provide advice and support in the context of work with boys.

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