



Study

Day Care Centres Building Bridges

Interculturally Oriented Parental Education in the Immigration Society

Executive Summary

The role of day care centres today extends far beyond children's education. Parent educational and advisory services, for example, parents' evenings or office hours offered by information centres in the day care facility, are designed to give parents all-round support. They aim to provide information and to mobilise the educational resources parents have at their disposal to positively influence a child's educational development very early on in life.

But the range of educational and advisory services at day care centres in Germany is not adapted to the cultural diversity of the families in many places. Despite a high level of interest, the services offered often do not reach immigrant families. Throughout Germany, only 27 per cent of day care centres have opened up their organisational structures to the social and cultural diversity of their families. This is shown in an analysis conducted by the SVR Research Unit for this study which is based on information from 237 day care facility managers provided under the scope of the National Educational Panel Study.

Parents with a migration background often face greater challenges raising and educating their children than parents in the native German population, e.g. if they are not familiar with the German education system or are confronted with linguistic or cultural obstacles. This is where teachers can be involved by offering **interculturally oriented parental education services**: teachers strive, in particular, to establish beneficial relationships with parents; they break down barriers that could prevent parents with migration backgrounds from taking advantage of parent services; and they structure the services to enhance the parenting skills of all parents, regardless of their cultural background, and give them more flexibility for action. In this way, day care centres build bridges to a culturally diverse group of parents.

Four overall conditions are favourable for integrating intercultural aspects into parental education: (1) **Intercultural skills of teachers** promote better understanding of the lives of parents with a migration background. (2) **Local partnerships with initiatives and facilities like advisory centres** support the effectiveness of intercultural parental education in day care centres, e.g. through the availability of additional expertise from external information centres or by providing access to the target group via immigrant organisations. The network partners also benefit from cooperation because the participation of parents with a migration background allows them to tailor their own services more effectively to intercultural needs. (3) **Diverse opportunities for parental involvement** in day care centres make it possible for families to incorporate their interests and abilities and influence the structure of parental education services. (4) Interculturally oriented parental education is geared toward all parents,



regardless of whether they have a migration background or not. In some situations, however, **specific educational services for parents with a migration background** have also proven effective because they can systematically address the special challenges immigrant parents face.

The *Länder* define the content and legal framework for interculturally oriented parental education. They have recognised the significance of this issue and expressly support the value of cultural diversity in families and the adaptation of parental services to the needs and interests of the families with a migration background. This is evident from an analysis of the *Länder's* education plans which implement and structure the educational mandate of the day care facilities.

Many day care facilities are actually already working very hard to provide parents with interculturally oriented educational and advisory services. But a substantial number of facilities are still not prepared to deal with diverse parental groups. This even holds true for many day care facilities with a high percentage of immigrants.

The overall conditions needed for parental education that incorporates intercultural aspects are not ensured in German day care facilities everywhere. Collaboration with external experts to provide parental educational services is widely established. Four out of five day care centres work with institutions such as refugee advisory centres, family education organisations or mid-wives' offices. In two-thirds of the facilities, parents have a wide range of options for participating in the day-to-day life of the day care centre and in organisational processes and can thus influence how parental education is structured. Teachers in day care centres are much less likely to have training in intercultural skills. Less than one-fifth of day care facilities offer intercultural training for its staff. Still, at least one teacher with a migration background works in around half of facilities. Educational services geared specifically toward parents with a migration background are only established at a small number of day care facilities: on average, around one in every nine day care centre offers these kinds of target group-specific measures, e.g. German classes.

Despite considerable efforts, intercultural aspects have only been partially integrated into parental education at day care facilities in Germany. There continues to be a great need for further action. The responsibility for across-the-board integration of intercultural issues into parental education is not borne by day care centres alone. The Federal Government, *Länder* and municipalities as well as researchers should support the day care centres in the following areas:

- (1) **Beneficial overall conditions:** day care centres need suitable structures, resources and concepts to implement interculturally oriented parental education appropriately, especially concrete recommendations for implementation, adequate staffing, coordinated networks and information on the effectiveness of certain measures.



(2) **Teacher training:** interculturally oriented parental education must be a central component of initial and advanced training for day care centre teachers.

Parents with a migration background should have the same access to support services as parents from the native population so that they can support their children more effectively throughout their education development. This is consistent with the goal of giving all children, regardless of their sociocultural background, the same opportunities for education and participation.