



Research on men in ECEC in Brazil

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Overview of the presentation

- The Brazilian educational system
- Background - ECEC as educational institution
- ECEC practitioners
- Men as workforce in the Brazilian ECEC
- Research on men in ECEC in Brazil
- Conclusions



The Brazilian educational system

Level	Step		Duration	Age group
Higher Education	Higher Education		Variable	Above 18 years old
Basic Education	Secondary Education		3 years	15 – 17 years old
	Primary Education		9 years	6 – 14 years old
	Early Childhood Education	Preschool	2 years	4 – 5 years
		Child care	3 years	0 – 3 years

Background - ECEC as educational institution



- The first Brazilian childcare institutions aimed to provide care to children whose parents belonged to the working class. They had mostly a social and sometimes a philanthropic role.
- 1988 – Brazil got a new constitution. The Brazilian state/government should guarantee early education and care for all children between 0-5 years old.
- 1996 – New educational law. ECEC became a part of the Brazilian educational system.
- Women's rights, children's rights and gender equality politics = more ECEC settings.
- The right to place children in the ECEC is connected to mother's employment and maternity leave (120 days). Fathers get only 5 days parental leave after child's birth.
- These ECEC sectors are managed by local government, in collaboration with state and federal Governments. Municipalities set up their own ECEC institutions and have the autonomy to establish regulations for their network of public and private nurseries and preschools.
- Early Childhood Education and Care in Brazil consists of nurseries (creches) for children between 0-3 years old and preschools for children between 4-5 years old.
- ECEC is obliged for children between 4-5 years old.

The curriculum

- Social constructivist approach + Piaget approach.
- The curriculum includes six rights related to children's learning and developing: their right to live together, play, participate, explore, express and self-knowledge (BNCC, 2018).
- All the rights focus on children's experience based on five different goals: "myself, the other and we"; "body, gestures and movements"; "features, sounds, colors and shapes"; "listening, speaking, thinking and imagination" and "spaces, time, quantities, relations and transformations".
- The goals are divided based on the children's age: babies (0 – 1,6); small children (1,7 – 3,11) and young children (4 – 5,11).
- No mention about gender and sexuality in the curriculum.

ECEC practitioners

- Preschool teachers: 3-4 years preschool teacher training programme at university or secondary school level
- ECEC assistants: secondary school. No special teacher training.
- Recruitment: private ECEC settings (CV, interview). Public settings (open public examination/test). Preschool teachers are placed in different settings according to their classification in the test.
- Assistants are working together with preschool teachers depending on the context.
- The number of children per group vary in the settings. There are national recommendations about that. Sometimes a high number of children (usually the ones between 4-5 years old) in the groups with only one responsible preschool teacher in the class.

Men as workforce in the Brazilian ECEC

- We have knowledge about the % of men working in ECEC only after 1996 when it became a part of the educational system.
- Profession got higher status after 1996. Men sought a stable job.
- 3,7 % are men in 2021 (INEP, 2022).
- Generally, there are no formal barriers for men to work in the Brazilian ECEC, especially the public ones. Open public examination/test.
- Exceptions: Some municipalities try to create own rules regarding the public examinations/test. Ex: men are not allowed to apply for the job or men cannot perform some specific tasks (give children shower, change diapers).
- There are reactions against such discriminatory rules from the civil and academic communities. Some municipalities have to review their recruitment rules.

Research on men in ECEC in Brazil

- The academic production: master dissertations (considered as research in Brazil), doctoral thesis and peer-reviewed articles.
- A total of 47 dissertations and thesis were published between 1996-2021 (Santos, 2023).
- Some articles were published based on the above dissertations and thesis.
- Thematic publication in form of 17 articles published by the journal “Revista zero-a-seis” in 2020. Cooperation between scholars and doctoral students who decided to create a group to discuss research on men in ECEC.
- Thematic publication in form of 24 articles published by the journal “Revista perspectivas em diálogo” in 2022.

The 1990s – the beginning of the academic production on men in ECEC



- Expansion of higher education.
- Reforms and new educational policies (1988 – constitution and 1996 – new educational law).
- Children’s rights to a public education with quality and free of charge provided by the state.
- Early Childhood Education began to establish as a research field in the end of 1990s. Same period that gender studies increased in the universities motivated by international studies, feminist movements and women’s rights and gender equality politics.
- Two studies on men in ECEC within social psychology field. They aimed to understand: ECEC as gender segregated field + presence and lack of men working in ECEC.
- Gender from an historical perspective (Joan Scott). ECEC connected to women’s work based on historical and cultural constructions of gender. Men’s role in ECEC in relation to structural gender norms and stereotypes.
- Such studies created a fruitful ground for research on men in ECEC in Brazil when they start to problematize gender from a historical and macro perspective.

Years 2000-2009 – Introduction of gender studies in the ECEC field



- The development of educational policies and establishment of ECEC as research field impacted the academic production.
- Studies on gender in ECEC aimed to investigate gender and sexuality in relation to teacher's pedagogical work and children. Gender roles. Still within the psychology subject in the beginning of 2000.
- The presence of men working in ECEC draws attention taking gender and sexuality as analytical concepts.
- First study within the Education in 2005. Male preschool teachers' experiences and their professional identity. Gender expectations on men based on their relationship to children, parents and colleagues. How they deal with gender expectations and create strategies to counteract them.
- Poststructuralism as theoretical approach to gender and sexuality takes more place in the research aiming to understand, problematize and discuss men's experiences and constructed identities in ECEC.

Years 2010 – 2019 – Huge increasing of research on men in ECEC

- 28 studies including master dissertations and doctoral thesis.
- Research on men in ECEC became a solid research field.
- Increase of men working in ECEC due to the expansion of ECEC in the municipalities motivated by the development of educational and gender equality policies in Brazil.
- Categories of analysis: preschool teachers' identities and life stories, strategies of insertion and permanence in ECEC. Other studies focused on men's pedagogical practices and how they could contribute to challenge gender stereotypes in ECEC.
- This period was marked by a diversification in using different methods and theories when studying men in ECEC.
- In addition to gender studies from a feminist post-structuralist theoretical approach, several studies were based on historical and other social theories not directly connected to gender.
- Research + activism: such studies aimed to confirm and ratify the presence of men in ECEC. Tensions created by conservative groups by questioning men's presence in ECEC settings.

After 2020 – More studies on men in ECEC



- 10 studies (dissertations + thesis) + two thematic publications on men in ECEC (total 41 articles).
- Many studies sought to problematize some tensions in relation to the presence of men in ECEC settings. They pointed out an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion towards men working with small children. Questioning their skills and fears of children sexual abuse.
- Research (Ramos, 2020) shows that male preschool teachers need to go through **a proof process** when they are working in ECEC in Brazil: **to be approved in the public examination/test; to prove they can care of children and teach them and to be approved by the community** (guardians, colleagues) **by proving that they have skills, are professionals and not a risk for to the children.**
- Growing of conservative and religious groups in the society who try to interfere in the politics. “Gender indoctrination” and “gender ideology”.
- Recent studies use critical approaches to gender and sexuality. To problematize gender roles, structures and norms, masculinities and power relations based on binary, essentialist constructions of gender and sexuality.
- An answer to these conservative groups who seeks to stop discussions about gender and sexuality in educational settings in Brazil.

Conclusions

- Men's presence in the Brazilian ECEC is quite new. It is tied to political reforms, societal movements, human (women's and children's) rights and professionalization of ECEC.
- Research on men in ECEC in Brazil has increased over the past two decades. Strong connection to the establishment of early childhood education as research field.
- Gender and sexuality as main analytical concepts taking into consideration historical, cultural and social factors.
- Main topics: to understand and problematize men's presence (absence), men's identities, practices and experiences in ECEC.
- It is still needed to gain more knowledge based on children's perspectives and observation as method for data collection.
- From developments to threats from conservative waves.
- Research on men in ECEC in Brazil is aligned with activism when conservative groups try to stop discussions on gender and sexuality in educational settings.

THANK YOU!

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