

PARAGUAY EDUCATION: ORGANIZATION, GENDER AND MALE TEACHING

*EDUCAÇÃO ESCOLAR DO PARAGUAI: ORGANIZAÇÃO, GÊNERO E DOCÊNCIA MASCULINA*

*EDUCACIÓN ESCOLAR EN PARAGUAY: ORGANIZACIÓN, GÉNERO Y DOCENCIA MASCULINA*



Beatriz Gouvea LOPES<sup>1</sup>  
e-mail: beatrizgouvealopes2016@gmail.com



Josiane Peres GONÇALVES<sup>2</sup>  
e-mail: josianeperes7@hotmail.com

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<sup>1</sup>Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Naviraí – MS – Brazil. Degree in Pedagogy.

<sup>2</sup>Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria – RS – Brazil. Professor. Postdoctoral in Education (PUCRS).

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**ABSTRACT:** This research aimed to identify and analyze what was published in the form of books and scientific articles in the Portal of Periodicals of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel – (CAPES) about the first level of Paraguayan public education, with emphasis on gender relations, more specifically on male teaching in Paraguay. The qualitative work showed in its results that the male teacher was initially a predominant presence in teaching in Paraguay, but this factor has changed over the years, with the right to access education for women. There was the feminization of teaching, currently, male teaching is in greater proportion in rural areas. By the time of completion of the present study, the absence of theoretical references that discuss male teaching in the country was perceived.

**KEYWORDS:** Paraguayan education. Gender of teachers. Male teachers.

**RESUMO:** Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo identificar e analisar o que foi publicado em forma de livros e artigos científicos no Portal de Periódicos da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamentos de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) sobre o primeiro nível da educação pública paraguaia, com ênfase para as relações de gênero, mais especificamente sobre a docência masculina no Paraguai. O trabalho, de natureza qualitativa, mostrou em seus resultados que o professor homem inicialmente era presença predominante na docência do Paraguai, porém este fator foi mudando ao longo dos anos, com o direito ao acesso à educação para as mulheres. Houve a feminização do magistério, e atualmente a docência masculina está em maior proporção na zona rural. Até o momento de finalização do presente estudo foi percebida a ausência de referenciais teóricos que abordem a docência masculina no país.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação paraguaia. Gênero dos docentes. Professores homens.

**RESUMEN:** El objetivo de la investigación fue identificar y analizar lo publicado en forma de libros y artículos científicos en el Portal de Periódicos de la Coordinación de Perfeccionamiento del Personal de Educación Superior (CAPES) sobre el primer nivel de la educación pública paraguaya, con énfasis en las relaciones de género, más específicamente sobre la docencia masculina en Paraguay. El trabajo cualitativo arrojó en sus resultados que el docente varón fue inicialmente una presencia predominante en la docencia en Paraguay, pero este factor ha ido cambiando a lo largo de los años, con el derecho de acceso a la educación de las mujeres. Hubo la feminización de la docencia, actualmente la docencia masculina es en mayor proporción en las zonas rurales. Al momento de culminar el presente estudio, se percibió la ausencia de referentes teóricos que aborden sobre la docencia masculina en el país.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación paraguaya. Género de los docentes. Profesores varones.

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## Introduction

The present study focused on conducting a bibliographic survey on what has been published about Paraguayan education, with a focus on gender issues of teachers, in order to present, discuss and analyze the productions that address the first level of education in Paraguay.

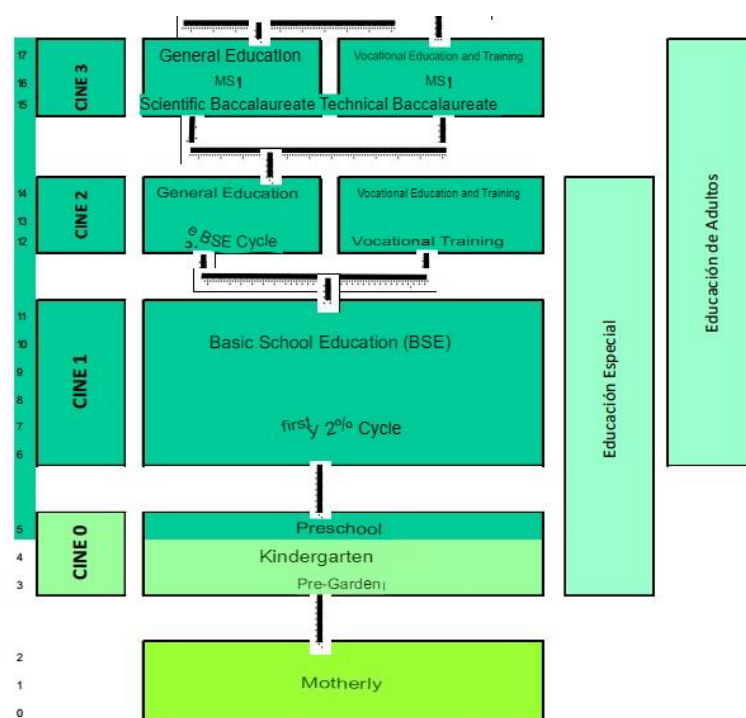
Having said this, it is important to initially understand how the levels of school education in Paraguay are divided to facilitate understanding, since it differs from Brazilian education. When addressing the Paraguayan school organization, Roesler (2017) highlights that in 1994 a proposal for educational reform occurred, which materialized in the General Education Law 1.264/1998 (PARAGUAY, 1998), which establishes that throughout the country formal education is structured in three levels, namely:

[...] The first corresponds to initial education and basic schooling, the second to middle education, and the third to higher education. As for the first level, which is made up of initial education, it comprises two stages: one lasting up to the age of three and the other up to the age of four. This level also includes basic schooling, which is organized in nine years, compulsory and free in public schools, including pre-school (ROESLER, 2017, p. 146, our translation).

According to Rivarola (2000), with the most recent reform in Paraguayan education, educational development was seen as the universalization of primary education and progress toward higher levels of secondary education. Previously, the education of children up to seven years old was seen as the obligation of their respective families.

Continuing the issue, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) of Paraguay incorporated preschool as part of formal education, which is distinguished into different levels: the maternal stage (0 to 2 years old); kindergarten (3 to 4 years old) and preschool (5 years old). Free and compulsory basic school education is nine years long, which are divided into three cycles of three years each (MEC, 2008). This division is better presented in the following table:

**Table 1 – Levels of Public Education in Paraguay**



Source: Paraguay (2014)

Through Table 1, we observe that Cine 0, Cine 1 and Cine 2, as well as the ages equivalent to each cycle, correspond to the First Level of Paraguayan Public Education. We also notice that there has been an update in these divisions, since the initial level comprises Kindergarten 2, Kindergarten 3, Kindergarten and Preschool. The first cycle corresponds to 1st grade, 2nd grade and 3rd grade. The second cycle corresponds to the fourth grade, fifth grade and sixth grade. The third cycle of basic education includes the seventh grade, eighth grade, and ninth grade. The so-called baccalaureate corresponds to the first year, second year and third year of what would be high school in Brazil.

Given the above, in view of the objective of this study, publications were found with the statistics of basic education teachers, as well as some files that discuss gender relations and the feminization of the teaching profession, which used to be composed mostly by male teachers, a reality that has changed over the years.

From this perspective, the research has as specific objectives: a) to search the Periodical Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel - (CAPES) to identify the publications about the first level of public education in Paraguay; b) to analyze if the publications related to school education in Paraguay present discussions about gender relations, more specifically about the process of feminization of the teaching profession and the performance of male teachers with children. In the light of the above, we seek to answer the

following questions: What gender representations are present in the teaching group of the initial grades of elementary education in Paraguay? What is the percentage of male teachers? How did the feminization process of the teaching profession occur? What were the historical aspects that marked the discussion about gender? These are the questions we intend to answer during the research.

The methodology adopted for the development of this study is based on the field of qualitative research, as it is the most appropriate approach to achieve the objectives presented here. Thus, a survey was made in digital databases, for the bibliographic review of these writings, we used the studies of Rivarola (2000), who contributed to the understanding of Paraguay's educational reform; Ferreira (2004) and Rossi (2008, 2015), who contributed with their discussions about teacher training and gender issues in Paraguay; quantitative data found on the website of the MEC Paraguay (2009), Ortolan (2010), Gonçalves and Carvalho (2016), among others, who discuss historical aspects about Paraguayan education, gender and teaching.

This paper initially brings a brief presentation and discussion of historical aspects involving the access of men and women to education, as well as their entry into teaching. Then, we show and analyze quantitative data about the presence of male and female teachers in Paraguayan education, with a focus on the first level, including the training that these teachers have, followed by the final conclusions.

Discussing this issue is relevant so that we can understand the processes that are present in Paraguayan education regarding gender relations, aiming to understand the factor that caused the predominance of women in the teaching space, as well as seek to contribute to the theoretical framework on the subject, since we have not identified publications that discuss the practices of male teachers at the first level of Paraguayan education, a factor that shows the limited study that the country has on gender issues and teaching practice.

Finally, we aimed to contribute to the theoretical framework that discusses the subject, as well as to promote greater visibility and discussion on gender and male teaching in Paraguayan schools, highlighting here the male teacher who teaches at the first level of basic education.

## Methodology

For the development of this study, we used the qualitative research approach; as to the nature, we can classify it as research of analytical character. When thought of in the course of the investigative process, it can be led by different paths, due to the research results (GODOY, 1995). In this perspective, the objective of this study is to map the production of scientific knowledge about gender relations present in the first level of Basic Education in Paraguay, performing the discussion and analysis of the bibliographic reference found in the databases of different digital platforms: websites, magazines, books, articles, theses and dissertations that address the theme.

For this article, we selected the methodology of qualitative research in education of an analytical nature, in order to achieve the objective proposed by the study, in which we focused on the search for bibliographic references that discuss Paraguayan education, also discussing gender relations in these spaces. Thus, we bring Bogdan and Biklen (1994, p. 195, our translation), who state:

[...] Qualitative researchers dispose of quantitative data collection critically. The qualitative researcher tends to turn the compilation process on its head by asking what the numbers say about the assumptions of the people who use and compile them.

In this sense, we bring the study of Godoy (1995, p. 21), for emphasizing that "[...] a phenomenon can be better understood in the context in which it occurs and of which it is part, and should be analyzed in an integrated perspective. In addition, documentary research was conducted in the digital databases of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the Government of Paraguay, where it was possible to locate quantitative data about the teachers who teach in Paraguayan basic education, emphasizing the gender of these teachers, providing a critical, reflective and comparative look between the percentage of men and women who follow this professional career.

Thus, from the direction and operating modes of this research, we put our efforts in the reading and categorization of the references found, selecting the investigative focuses in order to draw an analytical framework about the discussion that we proposed to make in this work.

## Historical Aspects of Paraguayan Education: A Look at Gender Issues

First, it is important to understand how the process of education of Paraguayan men and women throughout history took place, so that they could reach the teaching profession, bearing in mind that it is impossible to separate the studies of teaching from gender relations, which will be presented hereafter. That said, Ferreira (2004) emphasizes that in order to understand this profession, we need to recognize and understand how social transformations occurred, which gradually allowed women to enter the classroom, first as students, and then return as teachers, since this was an opportunity from the beginning aimed at men.

On this aspect, Enciso (2014) points out that in the National Archive of Paraguay there are documents that prove that Lázaro Lopes was assigned in 1596 as a teacher to teach children: he would be the first known teacher in the 16th century. At that time, education was only for boys; girls were forbidden to study in boys' schools, and thus, they grew up illiterate. In the same century, the religious orders of the Mercedarians, Jeronimos, Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits entered the country, and for lack of instructors they were the teachers of the educational process. The teachers until the 18th century were religious or civil religious formation.

Moreover, among the pioneer teachers who dedicated themselves to teaching the Paraguayan people we have José Gabriel Téllez, appointed teacher in 1802, and the Argentine Juan Pedro Escalada, who taught from 1807 to 1869. Due to the lack of teachers, the Superior Council of the Government recommended the use of the Lancasterian method, in which the most advanced and educated students taught the beginners (ENCISO, 2014).

Continuing, by the 1860s, in a pre-War time in Paraguay, the literacy rate of men was considerable, free and compulsory schooling was intended for boys, being raised to higher levels, while women were illiterate. However, over the years this situation changed: a new school program was developed in a now post-war context (from 1870), in which the press announced the creation of an exclusive school for girls, inaugurated at first in Asunción, in the capital, the so-called Escuela Central de Ninas (Central School for Girls). This exclusive school for girls brought a difference in teaching, being characterized, according to Ortolan (2010, p. 96, our translation), as:

[...] a school of cultural refinement, concerned much more with making them ladies suitable for social interaction, virtuous and polished, so that they could educate their children well. [...] Thus, not only materializing a personal training project, but also the educational and social moral purposes that postwar society aspired to.

In this period education represented the progress, the evolution of society, it was important that women were also educated, but in a model accepted by society, associated with the regeneration process for the Paraguayan people, in order to insert the country in modern nations (ORTOLAN, 2010).

The process of access to education for women went through many challenges, still, few had access to higher education. In the nineteenth century the doors to this stage of studies were opened through the exercise of teaching. Among the female teachers, the sisters Adela and Celsa Speratti were highlighted, who, despite the precarious education, taught and trained many girls in the capital and nearby cities. In this sense, Ortolan (2010, p. 99) also points out that "the first graduated school for girls was the Escola de Mestres, which later, in 1896, under President Juan Bautista Egusquiza, would give rise to the Escola Normal de Mestras. According to the Statistical Yearbook of 1887, of the 448 educators, 33% (148) were women."

In addition to the aspects mentioned, data from MEC (2009) that show the number of male and female students who enrolled in training courses for the teaching profession show that there has been a significant increase of women in the demand for teaching, as shown in the table below:

**Table 2** – Proportion of students enrolled in teacher training by gender

Municipality	GENDER		GENDER %		TOTAL	TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Asunción	422	707	37,4	62,6	1.129	31,1
Concepción	55	98	35,9	64,1	153	4,2
San Pedro	114	183	38,4	61,6	297	8,2
Cordillera	62	71	46,6	53,4	133	3,7
Guairá	107	176	37,8	62,2	283	7,8
Caaguazú	106	208	33,8	66,2	314	8,7
Caazapá	67	101	39,9	60,1	168	4,6
Itapúa	25	73	25,5	74,5	98	2,7
Misiones	-	11	-	100,0	11	0,3
Paraguarí	84	125	40,2	59,8	209	5,8
Alto Paraná	34	86	28,3	72,7	120	3,3
Central	97	228	29,8	70,2	325	9,0
Ñeembucú	41	74	35,7	64,3	115	3,2
Amambay	6	38	13,6	86,4	44	1,2
Canindeyú	34	33	50,7	49,3	67	1,8
Pdte. Hayes	29	44	39,7	60,3	73	2,0
Boquerón	15	72	17,2	82,8	87	2,4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.298</b>	<b>2.328</b>	<b>35,8 %</b>	<b>64,2 %</b>	<b>3.626</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: Adapted from Paraguay (2013)



It can be seen then that women were gaining space in the teaching profession, with the number of female teachers beginning to grow in a space that was predominantly occupied by men, representing approximately double the number of male entrants.

More equitable access to education was established at the end of the 19th century, with Paraguay's General Education Law nº 1.264 of 1998: according to it, the entire population has the right to education, and the State must create conditions and offer quality education for all (PARAGUAY, 1998). However, making an analogy to the education of men and women in urban and rural areas, Rossi (2008, p. 03, our translation) states that "Women have fewer years of schooling than men. A man in the urban sector has twice as many years of schooling as a woman in the rural sector." thus emphasizing that there is still inequality in rural women's access to school education.

Therefore, it is important to highlight here what Rabelo (2013, p. 05, our translation) emphasizes about gender discussions: "gender studies are important for the analysis of the presence of men in activities socially considered feminine, because the work of these professionals clashes with expectations and can show exceptions to gender standards". In other words, she invites us to reflect about the work of these professionals, understanding that the presence of male teachers in this space exerts a break to the standards, with its particularities. Many times, because there is a predominance of women in teaching children, boys are exposed to fewer male teachers, consequently, they can reinforce the idea in their heads that professions where there are more women are typically female.

### **The presence of men and women in the teaching profession at the first level of Paraguayan education: a quantitative approach**

In Brazil, teaching is considered a female profession due to the number of female teachers working in the field of education, which is not very different from the reality in Paraguay, as pointed out above. Over time, this profession has come to be seen as being more suitable for the female public, being associated with maternal skills, disregarding the professional training process of each individual. These factors are characterized as social representations that influence the way of thinking and the behavior of people who are inserted in certain contexts of society (GONÇALVES; CARVALHO, 2016).

Also, according to these authors, teaching was initially a male profession, in which only men studied and taught. However, over time, with the association of feminine characteristics

and other factors to the teaching profession, women began to enter the labor market and to exercise this profession, which is called by many authors the process of feminization of teaching or de-masculinization of teaching, to others.

With this in mind, every profession that becomes feminized suffers a devaluation process, with a decrease in salaries, for example. In this sense, we bring Rossi (2008, p. 5, our translation), who states this aspect: “Historically, it has been shown that activities, areas of study, sectors of power and work that are feminized tend to experience a social devaluation that is manifested either in the level of remuneration and branches of activity in which women predominate, or in the level of the work they perform.”

From this perspective, Rossi (2008) questions what may be happening with teacher training, since in primary education in Paraguay in the early 2000s, when she carried out her studies, she noticed that most of the teachers were women: 84% of the teaching staff was predominantly female and only 16% male. At the secondary level, this percentage drops to 65%, while the male percentage rises to 35% (i.e., the percentages alternate according to the level of education).

Martins, Rios and Vieira (2016) broaden our views so that we can understand how gender relations occur in the educational field, thus, it is necessary to understand that it is permeated by gender and that we need to think about the social and cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity. Regarding these constructions, which define the relationships between people, Vianna (2001) points out that several stereotypes about men and women persist, among which:

[...] aggressive, militaristic, rational, for them; docile, relational, affective, for them. As a result, functions such as feeding, motherhood, preservation, education, and caring for others become more identified with female bodies and minds, thus gaining an inferior place in society when compared to functions considered to be male (VIANNA, 2001, p. 13, our translation).

In view of the above, according to Bravo (1994), not everything is better on the male side, since society demands that men fulfill their social functions, and when they decide to stay at home, cook, clean, or take care of the children, this is seen as a deviation from their true identity, since, by acting this way, his wife can dominate him. From the moment that men and women break with roles and spaces designed for them, the author emphasizes that they may feel fear, shame, or guilt for breaking with pre-established standards. By the same token, the author invites us to think: "Thus, it is assumed that men and women have a different 'nature'. The saying 'men don't cry' is one of the clearest examples. The arrangement of appearance and

body control are fundamental axes in this polarization process" (BRAVO, 1994, p. 22, emphasis added, our translation).

In this way, regarding the feminization of teaching in Paraguay, Rossi (1991) points out that teacher training became a female career due to the fact that it was considered the only work activity (profession), outside of those functions performed at home, that a supposedly "decent and dignified" woman could perform. This was regardless of the social class to which the woman belonged, that is, it was considered the only socially accepted career for the female gender. However, from the moment it becomes feminized, teaching ends up losing its notoriety and prestige, becoming considered a profession that does not require much education or professional training (ROSSI, 2015). However, Rabelo (2013) turns our gaze to gender studies in the teaching profession, reporting that:

When emphasizing the female voices in current educational research, we run the risk of ignoring the thinking of men who go into teaching and the process of adaptation/recreation of the masculine in the school environment. When it comes to the male view of the teacher in this segment, there are almost no references to the theme (RABELO, 2013, p. 3, our translation).

This factor is in line with the studies presented, given that when we conducted a bibliographic survey of publications on male teaching in Paraguayan basic education, we were unable to find a significant number of studies that specifically addressed this issue. However, in Brazil it is possible to find several publications on the subject.

Considering the discussed aspects, data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) inform that, in 2010, Paraguay had around 73,637 teachers in the first level of Paraguayan basic education. That said, we highlight, through Table 3 below, data regarding the number of Paraguayan teachers in the first level of basic education. This data provides us with an understanding of the number of male teachers compared to the number of female teachers, who are predominant in the teaching force.

**Table 3** – Teachers by level, zone and sector (2010)

LEVEL	Early Education		Elementary School Education	
	Formal	Not formal	First and second cycle	Third cycle
<b>ZONA</b>				
Urban	4.643	79	17.642	18.756
Rural	3.652	31	18.410	10.424
<b>SETOR</b>				
Oficial	5.507	83	28.839	23.978
Subsidized	1.107	15	3.545	2.437
Private	1.681	12	3.668	2.765
<b>GENDER</b>				
Male	1.282	2	10.701	10.819
Female	7.013	108	25.351	18.361
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.295</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>36.052</b>	<b>29.180</b>

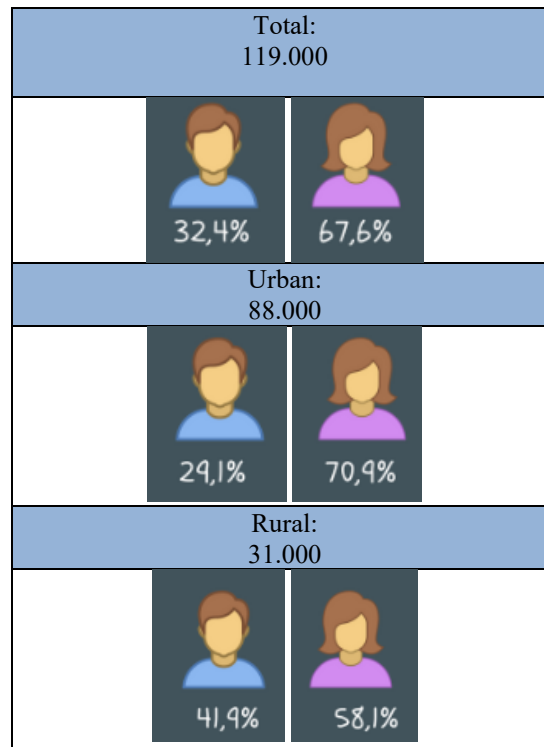
Source: Adapted from MEC-DGPE (2010) apud Paraguay (2013)

From the data presented it is possible to see that the number of male teachers in initial education was about twice as low as the number of female teachers. These are data from ten years ago, and are susceptible to change as time goes by. These are impacting numbers, in which we clearly perceive the female predominance in these spaces.

Having said this, in relation to male teachers, it is worth noting what Rabelo (2013, p. 16) states: "The presence of male teachers teaching in the early grades of elementary school is a way to insert gender issues in education and show children that men can also choose this activity and be successful," considering that the teacher has a strong influence on his students. Therefore, they can serve as role models for children who identify with the teaching profession.

Moreover, as we said, these are data from 2010. According to data from the General Directorate of Statistics, Surveys, and Census (DGEEC), in 2017 there were approximately 119,000 professionals dedicated to teaching throughout the country. Thus, we can see that there has been an increase in the number of teachers, as shown in the following table:

**Table 4** – Number of teachers by gender and zone (2017)



Source: Paraguay DGEEC (2018)

Based on the data presented, we can see that the number of male teachers is significant, but not balanced with the percentage of female teachers. One of the stereotypical views of this profession, which is present even in Brazil, and which may possibly be one of the reasons why there is not an equitable margin of male teachers in relation to female teachers, concerns the salary. On this aspect, Rabelo (2013, p. 14, our translation) points out that "the representation that this profession is poorly paid and, therefore, is not for men discriminates and can be a stimulus for the non-choice or the escape of the man in relation to teaching".

Thus, Driessen (2007) points out that the gender of the teacher does not interfere with performance, but advocating the need for male role models at school can reinforce gender stereotypes, such as, for example, that the teacher imposes more 'discipline', while the female teacher is more 'docile'. In contradiction to this, Rabelo (2013) considers that men do not lose their masculinity exercising this profession, but many times, they are considered as homosexuals, pedophiles or not good for the profession. In other cases, he may also reaffirm some of these social representations of men in working with young children.

In view of the above, Sayão (2005, p. 262, our translation) states that "the teaching work and the teaching profession cross gender boundaries, demystify conceptions and redefine positions", thus, along with the teaching work we add the discussions about gender, which can

contribute significantly to this deconstruction of pre-established thoughts and patterns. We also add that gender issues, being social, should be worked on in all areas of knowledge, so that we can contribute to the construction of a society where there is more equity.

Continuing with these issues, we find data from the MEC (2009) on the age range of teachers. These show that in Paraguay the age of teachers, whether men or women, varies according to the educational level they teach. At the first level, which encompasses initial education, most teachers are between 30 and 39 years old; next in the ranking are the youngest teachers, under 30. Teachers between the ages of 30 and 39 together make up about 70% of the total. An interesting factor to note is that in early education, 35.1% of the teachers are under 30 years old, while in basic education, which includes the first, second, and third cycles, 49.8% of the teaching staff is between 30 and 39 years old, and the number of teachers under 30 decreases to 23.2%.

Still related to the profile of teachers in Paraguay, it is relevant to discuss their academic qualifications, due to the fact that they play a very important role in improving the quality of education in the country. With this in mind, the data in Table 5 show, that in 2012, eight out of ten teachers at the initial level of education completed initial teacher training, but only one out of ten managed to finish university (PARAGUAY, 2014), as shown in the table:

**Table 5** – Percentage distribution of teachers according to academic qualification and level of education (pre-school, elementary, high school, and college) respectively

Level of education	2012											
	Preschool			ISCED 1			ISCED 2			ISCED 3		
	Total	Man	Woman	Total	Man	Woman	Total	Man	Woman	Total	Man	Woman
Lower secondary	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Upper secondary	5%	10%	4%	3%	6%	3%	2%	4%	1%	2%	3%	1%
Higher Technical	2%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	3%	1%
Training Teacher	78%	73%	79%	81%	83%	81%	57%	62%	55%	45%	49%	43%
University	10%	8%	10%	10%	7%	11%	31%	26%	34%	41%	37%	44%
Top Post no University	4%	3%	4%	3%	2%	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	4%
Top Post University	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	3%	2%	4%	6%	5%	6%

Source: MEC-DGPE, SIEC, 2012

Source: MEC-DPGE (2012), apud Paraguay (2014)

Based on Table 5, we can infer that teachers with higher degrees (teacher education, university education, and post-graduate education) teach at the highest levels, as in Cine 2 and Cine 3. It was also possible to notice that the percentage of teachers who have a university degree is generally low, and the percentage of qualified male teachers follows an increasing trend, showing that the great majority of them seek initial training to teach. It is worth noting

that 83% of the men who work in basic education have a teaching degree compatible with the level of education.

In this sense, with regard to the training of teachers to work in initial education, Law No. 1,264/98 in Article 30 establishes that:

La educación inicial será impartida por profesionales de la especialidad. En caso de imposibilidad de contar con suficiente personal, se podrán autorizar a profesionales no especializados en la materia para ejercer dicha docencia, con expresa autorización del Vice Ministro de Educación (PARAGUAY, 1998, p. 7, our translation)<sup>3</sup>.

With this in mind, according to this law, professionals without specialization are allowed to teach at that stage, so not everyone has the necessary training, as shown in Table 5. However, to be an educator, this citizen must have the professional title corresponding to the position, according to Art. 133 "The exercise of the teaching profession will be in charge of people of recognized ethical behavior and proven suitability, with the corresponding professional title, as prescribed in the corresponding legislation" (PARAGUAY, 1998, p. 22, our translation).

Thus, among the higher education institutions are the Teacher Training Institutes, which train teachers for initial education; on the other hand, to teach in pre-school, it is necessary to have a non-university degree from the Higher Pedagogical Institutes. Even so, according to the Brazilian Ministry of Education, in studies on Early Childhood Education in Mercosur countries (BRAZIL, 2013), access to this career requires the title of qualification to exercise the function, good conduct and suitability: the latter can be proven by proof of professional competence. With the presentation of these data, it was possible to observe that not all teachers have the appropriate training, but still practice the profession, due to the fact that they have acquired experience during their trajectory. These and several other factors that we have discussed throughout these writings are of great importance for the studies and reflections about the theme, pertinent dialogues to think about gender issues.

<sup>3</sup> "Initial training will be provided by professionals in the specialty. If there are insufficient personnel, professionals not specialized in the subject may be authorized to teach, with the express authorization of the Vice-Minister of Education" (PARAGUAY, 1998, p. 7, our translation)

## Final remarks

At the beginning of the research, the general objective was to identify and analyze what has been published in the form of books and scientific articles about the first level of Paraguayan public education, which includes early childhood education, preschool and basic education organized in nine years, with emphasis on gender relations and the role of male teachers.

Thus, the results of the study showed that teaching in Paraguay is a predominantly female profession; however, men occupy a significant space in school spaces, with a higher percentage in rural areas than in urban areas. That said, some authors point out that in the early days of Paraguayan school education, the parents of girls who lived in the countryside did not allow them to go to school, due to the influences they could receive in these spaces.

This was the reality in the rural area; in the urban area, only boys were allowed to study. In addition, we have to add the fact that the first teachers in Paraguay that we know of were men. Therefore, in a post-war moment in Paraguay and with the reorganization of educational policies, women got the right to go to school and, in this sense, regarding the professional career, they were allowed (in view of the cultural and socially constructed labels/standards) only to follow the profession of teachers, because it was the profession that best fit the profile of women, a so-called "more feminine" profession. These social transformations allowed women to enter the classroom, first as students and then as teachers. However, there was a devaluation of the profession, since the idea was that, because she was a woman and because this profession was considered at the time as an extension of domestic activities, she could be paid less. Thus, men, who initially were the great majority in the teaching career, gradually became a minority.

Another interesting factor in relation to the profile of these teachers was that until 2009, most first-level teachers were between the ages of 30 and 39, that is, between the young and adult years. Moreover, the 2012 data provided the reflection that male teachers have a higher level of education for teacher training than female teachers, which makes us stop to think about how this factor occurs: "is it that more training is required of men than of women, since they carry the baggage and experience of motherhood and child rearing?" This is a question that invites us to reflect, susceptible to future studies.

In view of the above, it is worth noting that there is a limited number of publications that address Paraguayan education, especially about gender relations in the teaching profession. The results found are mostly from sources and documentary bases provided in the digital platform of the MEC of Paraguay, and some journal articles in Spanish, published by authors



from Latin and South American countries. Therefore, it is important to mention that until the completion of this study no publications were found that discuss the performance of male teachers in school spaces in Paraguay and, thus, we emphasize the importance of developing new research that addresses the topic, considering its relevance to studies on gender and education.

In summary, it was possible to realize, based on months dedicated to the research of publications that deal with the subject, that the lack of studies that address the performance of these teachers are active mechanisms to develop new research on the subject, because it is necessary to give visibility and know the reality of this male teacher, understand the barriers and comments that he receives for choosing to work with children. Although there is a large number of studies on the performance of male teachers with children in Brazil, in Paraguay the reality is divergent, therefore, it is not possible to establish comparisons, since there is not much knowledge about this issue in the context of Paraguayan education.

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