



## MALE AND THE EXERCISE OF MEN TEACHERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A REFLECTION FROM THE SENSIBILITIES

### *MASCULINIDADES E O EXERCÍCIO DE PROFESSORES HOMENS NA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL: UMA REFLEXÃO A PARTIR DAS SENSIBILIDADES*

### *EL HOMBRE Y EL EJERCICIO DE MAESTROS EN EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL: UNA REFLEXIÓN DESDE LAS SENSIBILIDADES*

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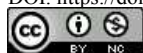
**ABSTRACT:** Considering sensitivity as a central element in the process of human formation, we sought, from working with this field of study, to make some reflections about masculinities and education. Therefore, we direct attention to the exercise of male teachers who work in the Early Childhood Education context, in view of the impasses surrounding the performance of these professionals in this stage of teaching. We chose as a general objective to understand which contributions are glimpsed from the study of sensibilities for reflection on masculinities in the context of Early Childhood Education. To reach our propositions, we carried out a theoretical and exploratory discussion. The study revealed that working with sensibilities in the educational field emerges as an important political-pedagogical tool, as it enhances the expansion of human experiences, as well as recovering the senses, aesthetic capacities and affections that were deprived throughout modernity.

**KEYWORDS:** Sensitivities. Masculinities. Male teachers. Child education.

**RESUMO:** Considerando a sensibilidade enquanto elemento central no processo de formação humana, buscamos a partir do trabalho com esse campo de estudo, tecer algumas reflexões acerca das masculinidades e educação. Assim sendo, direcionamos uma atenção para o exercício de professores homens que atuam no contexto Educação Infantil, tendo em vista os impasses que cercam a atuação desses profissionais nessa etapa de ensino. Elegemos como objetivo geral compreender que contribuições são vislumbradas a partir do estudo das sensibilidades para a reflexão sobre masculinidades no contexto da Educação Infantil. Para alcançar nossas proposições, realizamos uma discussão teórica e exploratória. O estudo revelou que o trabalho com as sensibilidades no campo educacional desponta enquanto uma importante ferramenta político-pedagógica, uma vez que potencializa o alargamento das experiências humanas, bem como recupera os sentidos, capacidades estéticas e afetos que foram destituídos ao longo da modernidade.

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Sensibilidades. Masculinidades. Professores homens. Educação infantil.*

**RESUMEN:** *Considerando la sensibilidad como un elemento central en el proceso de formación humana, buscamos, a partir de trabajar con este campo de estudio, hacer algunas reflexiones sobre las masculinidades y la educación. Por ello, dirigimos la atención al ejercicio de los profesores varones que laboran en el contexto de Educación Infantil, ante los impasses que rodean el desempeño de estos profesionales en esta etapa de la docencia. Elegimos como objetivo general comprender qué aportes se vislumbran del estudio de las sensibilidades para la reflexión sobre las masculinidades en el contexto de la Educación Infantil. Para llegar a nuestras propuestas, realizamos una discusión teórica y exploratoria. El estudio reveló que trabajar con sensibilidades en el campo educativo surge como una importante herramienta político-pedagógica, ya que potencia la expansión de las experiencias humanas, así como la recuperación de los sentidos, capacidades estéticas y afectos que fueron privados a lo largo de la modernidad.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Sensibilidades. Masculinidades. Profesores varones. Educación infantil.*

## Introduction

The epistemic exercise of discussing the main issues surrounding men and masculinities, is first of all, a political commitment to reflect on the sociocultural constructions that surround the male in society. It is visible that patriarchy as a hegemonic system has imposed a set of symbols, rules, and norms around these subjects, conditioning them, almost always, to a place marked by violence, aggressiveness, threat and/or power.

Rethinking these arrangements appears as an urgent task for us to constitute other social experiences, based on the principles of respect and gender equity. In addition, it is essential to break with the discourses and practices that historically have been conditioning a set of hierarchies within social relations, especially regarding male practices, since they were constituted amid the assumptions of a hegemonic masculinity<sup>3</sup> (ALBUQUERQUE JÚNIOR, 2014; CONNELL; MESSERSCHMIDT, 2013; MEDRADO; LYRA, 2008; SILVA, 2020).

Even so, inscribing them in a body of change demands that we rethink their training, restoring their emotions, senses, and subjectivities, so that these subjects come to experience

<sup>3</sup> We can understand hegemonic masculinity as a normative standard that has been imposed on men by the patriarchal project. Connell and Messerschmidt (2013) argue that "[...] only a majority of men may adopt it. But it is certainly normative. It embodies the most honorable way of being a man, it demands that all other men position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimizes the overall subordination of women to men" (CONNELL; MESSERSCHMIDT, 2013, p. 245, our translation).





other relationships with themselves and with others around them. This movement, in turn, will enable men to reflect about the place they occupy in the gender arena, as well as to break with the domination project that has reiterated a stiffened armor around their bodies and performances, keeping them away from their poetic self.

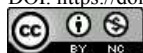
Amidst these entanglements, the proposal of an education for sensibility emerges as a counter-hegemonic alternative, to the extent that it transcends a purely technical, instrumental rationality, enhancing a process of wholeness with oneself, with one's inner self (ARAÚJO, 2009; DIAS, 1999; DUARTE JÚNIOR, 2000; MAFFESOLI, 1996; 1998). In what specifically refers to men, we believe that educating for sensibility will allow these subjects to incorporate other constitutive dimensions around their selves, through a process of humanization.

When we analyze the contemporary scenario, we realize that several efforts have been undertaken in the constitution of other meanings around men, distancing them from the assumptions of a hegemonic masculinity, based on the principles of strength, violence and/or aggressiveness. Within this framework, we highlight the actions that emerge from feminist movements, considering that their political-pedagogical actions have contributed a lot to the implementation of a policy of respect and gender equity.

Although these changes signal significant advances, we believe that we still have a long way to go, since the sociocultural constructions of gender remain sedimented in the different social/institutional organizations, conditioning a set of hierarchies and/or subordinates. When we observe the teaching activity in the context of Early Childhood Education, for example, we notice that this professional field is delimited within binary gender structures.

Immersed in this dynamic, we found the existence of a series of tensions around the exercise of male teachers in Early Childhood Education, where an archaic idea persists around these professionals. This is because male teachers are conceived from hegemonic constructions of gender, being interpellated in the condition of males, devoid of sensibilities, therefore, considered as incapable of developing a work with children who compose the age group from 0 to 5 years old.

In this sense, unveiling the existing contrarities in this professional field, will make it possible to deconstruct the backward conceptions that have delimited the experiences forged by male teachers in this field, thus providing the opportunity to walk in the constitution of a new reality. On the other hand, it will allow men to broaden their experiences in the arena of gender relations, by using discourses and practices that are based on the principles of respect and gender equity.





Assuming sensibility as a central element in human relations, we believe that it is through a sensitive education that we will transcend this exclusionary, hegemonic rationalism (MAFFESOLI, 1996). This movement will mobilize men and women in the constitution of a reality politically and pedagogically committed to the institution of practices of humanization, respect, and acceptance of diversity, including, as far as male teachers are concerned.

To dimension such problematizations can be understood as a movement that seeks to correspond to the demands that emerge during contemporaneity. Thus, to broaden an understanding around this reality, we elected as the guiding question of our study "What contributions can be glimpsed from the study of sensitivities to the reflection on masculinities in the context of Early Childhood Education?"

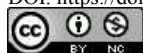
Seeking to answer our questions, we took as a general objective to understand what contributions are glimpsed from the study of sensitivities to the reflection on masculinities in the context of early childhood education. Regarding the specific objectives, we have: (i) identify the main contributions that emerge from the study of sensibilities to think about masculinities in Early Childhood Education; (ii) discuss the proposal of a sensitive education as a possibility to broaden masculine experiences.

Pursuing this approach, we conducted a theoretical and exploratory discussion, based on productions that discuss the intersection between masculinity and education, as well as studies on sensitivities.

### **The Sensibility: Possibility of a Pedagogy Other?**

According to Maffesoli (1996), to the extent that the human being recognizes his sensibility, he lights up his humanity, that is, his relations with the other (MAFFESOLI, 1996, p. 85). Through this sensitive condition, we mobilize a set of knowledge that brings us closer to ourselves, to our inner self. Therefore, to recognize its centrality in the process of human formation is an essential movement for us to constitute multiple experiences, based on humanization processes.

Based on this understanding, the proposal of a sensitive education must be understood as a transgressive pedagogy, since it transcends the purely technical rationalism, devoid of affections. We believe that sensibilities trigger significant reunions around the "I", making it possible to capture other senses around our existence, as well as to awaken emotions, subjectivities that were previously sedimented. For Araújo (2009, p. 205, our translation), the sensitive condition can be understood as a





[...] state of aesthetic openness that implies inherence and adherence to the heart of the lived/living experience and focuses on the expression of awe that amazes and overflows in admiration. An admiration that co-moves us before the in-tensities and the plasticity of the phenomena, of existence. A state that calls and involves us completely in the processes of coexistence; that leads us to perceive and understand the recesses of the tangle that make up the mestizo web of the phenomena of existing; that unveils itself in a dawning opening to the crepuscularity of being-being, in its original radicality, in its bottomless depth. An opening to the web of its intersections and hybridizations, paradoxes and enigmas, to the tensorial fluxes of existence.

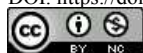
In this sense, incorporating a sensitive dynamic in the midst of our social practices is a powerful movement, as it allows us to explore the multidimensionality of our being, through other learning processes. On the other hand, we understand that this perspective offers us significant lenses for us to see the reality that surrounds us, contemplating aspects that for a long time have been suppressed and/or denied in the name of a hegemonic matrix.

However, against this movement, we see that sensibilities have historically been conditioned to negation, being placed at the margins of the processes of knowledge production. Based on a positivist view, this dimension was considered irrelevant in the process of human formation and was therefore discarded. Maffesoli (1996) points out that, in the 19th century, this condition was suppressed by an idea of rationality that was established as the only legitimate knowledge.

This way of looking at the issue directly contributed to the omission of some areas of knowledge, being classified as "[...] dangerous fusses that should be got rid of, or at least relegated to particular spheres of existence (poetry, childhood, games, entertainment) [...]" (MAFFESOLI, 1996, p. 71, our translation). Still according to the author, we can affirm that the non-recognition of sensibilities as a constitutive element of human relations was immersed in an intellectual moralism.

It is worth noting that this intellectual moralism highlighted by Maffesoli (1996), reiterated a series of consequences for humanity, because it subtracted from its individuals their capacities and aesthetic perceptions, conditioning them to imprisonment within an archaic society project. According to the respective author, it becomes necessary then

[...] remember the very deep moralism of the intellectual endeavor. Or, at least, its inability to grasp the whole sensitive dimension of existence. It is less, in essence, a matter of an individual disposition than of a global perspective, of a dogmatic propensity, in a way, resting on the rupture with common evidence. In a word, one could speak, in this respect, of "ascetic doctrines" that will privilege the cognitive process to the detriment of the life of the senses (MAFFESOLI, 1996, p. 69, our translation).





Immersed in this dynamic, we have witnessed the exaltation of a technical rationality, based on the assumptions of a universal knowledge, considered as absolute truth. It can be stated, therefore, that while this hegemonic perspective of knowledge was implemented, a policy of discrediting the knowledge that was not based on these universal principles was also established.

These arrangements, in turn, have contributed to the process of human incompleteness, since people have not touched their sensibilities, affections and/or emotions, becoming hostages of a slavery system. In consonance, we realize that the maintenance of these arrangements has directly corroborated the continuity of a reality marked by practices of intolerance, dehumanization, and lack of empathy with the other and with their human condition.

In Araújo's (2009) considerations, the continuity of this hegemonic project of knowledge also triggered susceptible consequences to the field of education, since educational practices were reduced to the condition of "[...] instructional practices, in the proportion that they privilege pragmatics and functionality, aiming at the technical (in)training of individuals to exercise their professional functions, their social roles" (ARAÚJO, 2009, p. 210, our translation).

However, we need to understand that the plastering of these educational practices brings serious damages to the individual and collective plan, because it does not provide the necessary subsidies for the formation of critical citizens. In this way, situating the place of sensibilities in the educational process sounds like a subversive pedagogy, as it breaks with the instrumental logic imposed during modernity. Based on these assumptions, Maffesoli (1998, p. 292, our translation) defends that

[...] the sensitive is not just a moment that one could or should overcome, within the framework of a knowledge that progressively becomes purified. It must be considered as a central element in the act of knowledge. It is an element that allows us to be in perfect congruence with the diffuse social sensibility that has been discussed.

Considering these considerations, we believe that the school, as a social institution responsible for the integral formation of social agents, assumes a privileged place for the awakening of sensibilities, since it enables meetings and affective exchanges around the school community and the subjects that weave their educational experiences there. Still, it is necessary that we mobilize strategies that transcend the instrumental perspective, based on the principles of this dominant rational moralism.



This movement, in turn, will potentialize the unleashing of new realities, providing a multidimensional formation, where the experience of the senses comes to life. In this way, while "[...] a possible methodological inversion is proposed, that is, that the experience of the senses occupies a protagonist role in the educational action, it is possible for us to infer that a different and less rationalist formation can occur" (RODRIGUES; ROBLE, 2015, p. 211, our translation).

Although the school institution occupies a central place in this process, we understand that the awakening of sensibilities is constituted as a constant movement, going far beyond the actions developed in this space. This is because the experience with the sensitive is not restricted to the academy, but, on the contrary "[...] it happens in life every day, in the relationship with objects and people, in the relationship with the world around us, and every moment transforms us and puts us in continuous movement" (DIAS, 1999, p. 177, our translation).

### **Re-signifying Masculinities from the Sensibilities**

When we redirect our attention to the construction of the representations of masculinities in the West, we realize that this movement was biased in an androcentric perspective, where the man assumed the status of universal being, a reference to be incorporated by all (BADINTER, 1993). Because of this, a set of hierarchies were constituted in the context of gender relations, highlighting the framework of inequalities between the masculine and feminine.

Based on the maintenance of this hegemonic project, based exclusively on a masculine, heterosexual, white and bourgeois matrix, several mechanisms were developed to ensure the continuity of these discrepancies. When dealing with this reality, Bourdieu (2012, p. 17, our translation) points out that "[...] the division between the sexes seems to be 'in the order of things'", where through imaginary lines, the activities belonging to the "world" of men and women were naturalized.

In the midst of these shifts, it is constituted in the social and cultural imaginary, a misrepresentation about masculinities, where symbols, signs, and institutions have been reiterating a hegemonic vision around men. Based on these arrangements, Albuquerque Júnior (2014, p. 109, our translation) points out that becoming a man was based on a

[...] process of hardening, of cooling of emotions, of the construction of a being endowed with an emotional shell capable of defending him from emotional spills, a being contained within himself, closed in on himself,





avoiding any form of opening to the other that would be symbolically associated to the feminine.

These facts, in turn, reflect the harmful effects that patriarchy has undertaken around the male experiences, since this system has taken charge of shaping a reality anchored in discourses and practices that reinforce the frameworks of male chauvinism, sexism, misogyny, and LGBTphobia. Immersed in this scenario, men were deprived of their subjectivities, affections, and sensibilities, being, therefore, hostages of an imprisonment within the precepts of a hegemonic masculinity.

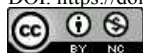
To dimension such problematizations demands that we have a critical reading around the sociocultural constructions of gender, interpreting them as part of a hegemonic project that was idealized in the course of history. On the other hand, it is necessary to demystify the conceptions that are based on an essentialist view, understanding that these contribute directly to the reproduction of violence and gender stereotypes. In this movement, Garcia (2015, p. 9, our translation), defines masculinities as

[...] dynamic historical processes, are configured in diverse and localized ways in each time and social group. These configurations point to the agency and mobility of individual and collective subjects to signify their life experience. They do so according to the interpretation of symbolic resources around the feminine and masculine genders offered to them by their culture of reference.

Considering the negative impacts that patriarchy has unleashed around masculine experiences, it is essential to break with the continuity of this violence, as well as provide men with other possibilities to experience their social practices. This process, in turn, foresees that we come to forge alternatives that reiterate a plural masculinity, politically and pedagogically committed to the construction of a society based on the principles of respect for diversity and gender equity.

In this sense, rethinking masculinities from other constitutive dimensions emerges as a powerful instrument of political transformation, as it re-signifies the social and cultural imaginary that has been constituted around the male universe. On the other hand, it enables the introduction of other behavioral patterns in the gender arena, distancing men from the authoritarian and violent practices that have been legitimized by patriarchy. It is necessary to incorporate such changes, since

The process that leads someone to become a man, to stop being a child and become a manly and masculine adult seems to imply the occurrence of affective, emotional losses, it seems to lead to a distancing, a more painful and radical distancing in relation to the childhood universe, which leads to this







permanent lament of lost time and this constant gesture of mediation of the distances that separate the boy from the grown man [...] (ALBUQUERQUE JÚNIOR, 2014, p. 106, our translation).

As mentioned by Albuquerque Júnior (2014), men were subjected to patriarchal dogmas from an early age, being instructed to assume a position of hardness and coldness, in an attempt to distance themselves from the ideals of a supposed femininity. However, we understand that this oppressive structure built around the male experiences has been causing serious consequences for them, since it has affective and emotional losses around their lives.

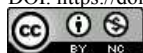
As we dare to think of other identities and performances for men, distancing them from patriarchal assumptions, we ensure other experiences for these subjects, now, no longer in the position of torturers and/or perpetrators of violence, as it had been naturalized for a long time. For García (2015, p. 113, our translation) "[...] the transformative potential of the new masculinities as a political category resides in the questioning of power in everyday practices at the individual, relational, and structural level as a principle of action".

Walking in this direction, points to an inversion in the logic imposed by patriarchy, since it allows us to question the power relations circumscribed amidst the experiences woven by men, as well as to constitute other meanings around masculinities. Pursuing this purpose, distancing them from archaic principles, demands that we re-educate these subjects from the fundamentals of a sensitive education, restoring their affections, subjectivities, and emotions.

We believe that it is through a sensitive education, committed politically and pedagogically with emancipation processes, that men will be able to "[...] rescue in themselves the being of poetry, the sensitive look, the expressiveness, the creative potential" (DIAS, 1999, p. 178, our translation). It is increasingly agreed that by incorporating such senses, these subjects can restore a male identity that had been denied, thus moving towards the construction of a society anchored in gender equity.

### **Masculinities and the Practice of Male Teachers in Early Childhood Education**

The tensions that surround the exercise of male teachers in the context of Early Childhood Education indicate the maintenance of sociocultural constructions of gender. Amidst these entanglements, at times we are faced with the rejection/strangeness of these professionals, at other times with a process of resistance around their entry and/or performance. It could be said, therefore, that this professional field is demarcated within the frameworks of machismo and sexism constituted throughout history.





The research developed in this field of discussion (LOURO, 1997; OLIVEIRA, 2011; SILVA, 2020) has pointed to the existence of an archaic imaginary around this professional activity, where speeches, symbols and practices have reproduced a series of backward conceptions around teaching in Early Childhood Education. These arrangements not only point to the continuity of hegemonic and oppressive categories, but also cooperate to reproduce essentialist conceptions that have been naturalized around masculinity and femininity.

Rethinking such configurations will make it possible to forge alternatives for destabilizing these discourses and practices that are unleashing oppressive structures around the exercise of male teachers. On the other hand, it will advance in the constitution of other social experiences, since it will introduce a change within this professional field, as well as in society as a whole. In reflecting on these issues, Louro (1997, p. 107, our translation) points out that

These representations, although sometimes conflicting, typified female and male teachers. In a perhaps somewhat schematic way, one could say that the dominant representation of the male teacher was - and probably still is - more linked to authority and knowledge, while that of the female teacher was more linked to care and "maternal" support for the students' learning.

Based on the author's considerations, we believe that deconstructing these imaginaries will allow the constitution of other meanings around the exercise of these professionals. This movement is necessary, as it breaks with the dichotomous and binary vision reiterated in this space. This is because male teachers are seen as professionals out of place, while female teachers are conceived within the ideals of kindness, delicacy, and gentleness, supported by the figure of the aunt<sup>4</sup>.

We believe that the reiteration of the speeches and/or practices based on this backward conception is circumscribed in the culturally constituted gender roles, where women have been conditioned to care practices. These facts also reflect historical traces, since for "[...] many centuries the care and education of young children were understood as tasks of family responsibility, particularly of the mother and other women" (OLIVEIRA, 2011, p. 58, our translation).

Based on the maintenance of these assumptions, a set of hierarchies were established in this professional field, based almost always on the hegemonic devices that were regulating the

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<sup>4</sup> In the book "Professora sim, tia não: cartas a quem ousa ensinar", Paulo Freire (1997) describes the dangers that are engendered around the name "aunt" to designate the work developed by female teachers in the early years of elementary education. For the author, "[...] reducing the teacher to the condition of an aunt is an 'innocent' ideological trap in which, by trying to give the illusion of sweetening the teacher's life, what is being attempted is to soften her fighting capacity or entertain her in the exercise of fundamental tasks" (FREIRE, 1997, p. 18, our translation).





social field. Within this framework, male teachers were considered inadequate professionals to work in Early Childhood Education, because they were understood within the assumptions of a hegemonic masculinity, reiterated from the aspects of strength, hardness and/or domination.

To the extent that male teachers were framed in this dominant model, teaching at this stage of Basic Education continued to be engendered as a female profession. On the other hand, female teachers started to be conceived as "spiritual mothers" and their students as children (LOURO, 1997, p. 97, our translation). When dealing with this essentialist vision that surrounds women in society, Medrado and Lyra (2008, p. 923, our translation) explain that

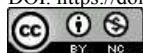
[...] the supposed biological destiny of women to motherhood has been constructed through symbols, religious, legal, educational prescriptions, social organizations, and subjective identities. In contrast, the masculine, by being associated 'with the production and administration of wealth,' is removed from the 'realm' of reproduction other than by fertilizing semen. Intersubjectivities of women and men escape prescription, as does their social organization into political movements.

Taking another direction, Louro (1997) points to the need to restructure not only the discourses that have fed this imaginary, but also the places that are based on this logic. For the author, through the construction of "[...] new organizational forms, teachers begin to constitute themselves differently, moving away, in part, from the priestly character of the activity and seeking to give this activity a more political and professional mark" (LOURO, 1997, p. 108, our translation).

Amid the considerations of Louro (1997), we understand that the exercise of teaching in early childhood education, as well as in any other stage and/or level of education, needs to be understood beyond the sociocultural constructions, especially those located in the sphere of gender. Therefore, it is necessary to reaffirm its professional character, as well as its social, political, and pedagogical function in the institution of a society marked by gender justice and equity.

Strategies for the demythification of binary and essentialist conceptions of gender, will allow us to advance in the constitution of other experiences in the field of teaching, especially in the context of early childhood education. These actions aim not only at the insertion of male teachers in this territory, but also of all those professionals who are stigmatized, often excluded, either because of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

On the other hand, we understand that to dimension such problematizations goes far beyond just thinking about gender issues present in the context of teaching, it is inserted before anything else, in the struggles and claims led by social groups that have historically been placed





on the margins of society. It is through these movements of denunciations, therefore, that we will advance in the constitution of a fairer reality for all.

In what specifically refers to male teachers, we believe that their insertion in this context makes it possible to problematize the dichotomous, binary and excluding gender relations, since these have been used as a mechanism to regulate their bodies and/or practices. On the other hand, it will advance in the constitution of other meanings and representations around this profession once these professionals break with the models sedimented in the imaginary of this professional activity.

### **Teaching through the lens of the Sensible: encounters between masculinities and sensibilities**

Thinking about teaching from the point of view of the sensitive emerges as a counter-hegemonic alternative, as it allows to overcome an excluding rationalism, responsible for depriving the senses of human reality. We believe that this movement will enable a transformation in the field of education, as it will allow the professionals who work in it to constitute educational experiences that distance themselves from the totalitarian and/or dehumanizing conceptions that have been ruling our social practices.

It is, therefore, from the incorporation of a sensitive dynamic that the educational institutions will act in a welcoming perspective, through teaching and learning processes that are based on a policy of respect for human diversity. On the other hand, it will allow a paradigm shift in this territory, breaking the discourses and/or practices that have long been subject to questioning. Taking this position, Duarte Júnior (2000, p. 177, our translation) points out that

An education that recognizes the sensitive foundation of our existence and gives it due attention, propitiating its development, will certainly be making the logical and rational mechanisms of the human consciousness more comprehensive and subtle.

Through this multidimensional education, which transits between the sensitive and the intelligible, as mentioned by Duarte Júnior (2000), we find a set of elements that signal the constitution of other narratives, as in the case of male teachers who have confronted the dominant gender paradigms. Thus, the work with sensitivities in the school context enables the widening of educational experiences, since it recognizes diversity as the foundation of human relations.



This movement also invites us to think about other representations of masculinity, no longer based exclusively on the male figure occupying the position of oppressor, aggressive and/or authoritarian, as has long been reproduced in different instances of society. This is because, we need to remember that "[...] the collective power of men is not only built in the ways men internalize, individualize, and reinforce it, but also in social institutions" (MEDRADO; LYRA, 2008, p. 826, our translation).

Aiming to introduce a change in this scenario, we note that the emergence of new masculinities has enabled men to distance themselves from hegemonic arrangements, since they resignify their discourses and social practices. Even so, a more radical change is necessary, so that these subjects come to reject all forms of violence and/or inequalities present in their daily lives. For this, we understand that a sensitive education is essential, because, as described by Albuquerque Júnior (2014, p. 106, our translation)

The process that leads someone to become a man, to stop being a child and become a manly and masculine adult seems to imply the occurrence of affective, emotional losses, it seems to lead to a distancing, a more painful and radical distancing in relation to the childhood universe, which leads to this permanent lament of lost time and to this constant gesture of mediating the distances that separate the boy from the grown man [...].

Based on the considerations of the respective author, we realize that the formation of male identities was engendered in processes of loss, which triggered an incompleteness around these subjects. Thus, it is urgent to establish new experiences, so that men can recover other meanings around their existence, as well as experience the relationships that were denied to them due to the maintenance of a society based on a sexist, and LGBTphobic structure.

Pursuing this purpose, it could be said that the practice of male teachers in Early Childhood Education moves in this direction, since it seeks to overcome the dominant models of gender and constitute other educational experiences in this professional field. On the other hand, we realize that as these subjects reconstruct other meanings and narratives around teaching in Early Childhood Education, they also rethink their masculine practices, in which they clothe themselves with their sensibilities, aesthetic perceptions, and affections.

When reflecting about the different places occupied by men in the arena of gender relations, Medrado and Lyra (2008, p. 826, our translation) point out that "[...] many men in (a)diverse social conditions also face, on a daily basis, the impossibility/obligation of responding to the hegemonic model of masculinity. Converging with this line of thought presented by the authors, we note that male teachers have advanced in the deconstruction of an exclusionary policy that is based on a biologizing essentialism.



This option assumed by these professionals signals the constitution of non-hegemonic masculine identities, since it distances these subjects from the models crystallized throughout modernity. Similarly, it introduces a modification in the spaces where they are inserted, because it presents other possibilities of existence. To Araújo (2009), we can understand this movement as a reawakening of sensibilities, since

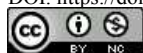
[...] enables the being-in-the-world-with-the-others, in an embodied and radical way, through the processes of perception and understanding in which we can touch, smell, listen, taste, and look at the world, as well as jointly think and meditate through our direct and original relationship with it. This disposition leads to ways of knowing - *sapere* - imbued with the living-living elan that translate a "dynamic rooting" (ARAÚJO, 2009, p. 202, our translation).

It is through this sensitive state, as mentioned by Araújo (2009), that male teachers have reconfigured the context of teaching in early childhood education, where they give new representations of masculinity in this professional field. Thus, we believe that sensitivities expand human experiences, since they provide opportunities for the emergence of new social/professional experiences.

The insertion of male teachers in the context of Early Childhood Education, for example, can be understood as an awakening to these new reconfigurations that have emerged in the course of contemporaneity, because it causes a series of changes in the models that were taken as universal truths, therefore, untouchable. Furthermore, it mobilizes new political-pedagogical actions in the constitution of a reality based on the principles of respect, equity, and social justice for all.

The work developed from the standpoint of sensitivities provides an opportunity to unveil new narratives and representations. In other words, it allows the overcoming of models sedimented throughout modernity, understanding that these are based on a purely excluding, hierarchical and unequal rationality. In Duarte Júnior's (2000) conception, contemporaneity demands that we rethink social organization, as well as the formative processes in which we are immersed, because

The subject we need to get through the present crisis can no longer be understood as the one advocated by the Enlightenment, with all the emphasis falling on its rationalizing capacity, its strict ability to construct and adapt to a universal knowledge and, therefore, disembodied and outcast. On the contrary, what is needed, first and foremost, is a sensitive subject, open to the particularities of the world around him, which, without a doubt, must be articulated to the human planetary culture (DUARTE JÚNIOR, 2000, p. 178, our translation).





The points proposed by Duarte Júnior (2000), reiterate the urgency of establishing educational processes that transcend the dominant rationalism, in view of its insufficiency to correspond to the real human needs. On the other hand, the author proposes the work with sensibilities as a strategy to discontinue this movement, since it mobilizes knowledge that allows the overcoming of this excluding reality.

Converging with this perspective, we believe that the awakening of sensibilities will lead male teachers to a restructuring in this professional field, since it will allow them to reject the discourses and practices that have been anchored in an essentialist perspective of gender. At the same time, it will reconstitute the imaginary of masculinities, considering that it will provide opportunities for other experiences and representations for men.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Thinking about the intersection between masculinities and education from the studies about sensibilities, rekindles the central character that these themes occupy in the process of human formation and strengthening of social relations. Therefore, we direct our attention to the professional practice of male teachers who work in the context of Early Childhood Education, considering the impasses that surround the performance of these professionals in this stage of education.

Thus, aiming to reflect on these issues, we took as the guiding question of our study: "What contributions are glimpsed from the study of sensibilities to the reflection on masculinities in the context of early childhood education? To answer our questions, we started from studies developed in this discursive field, which allowed us to make some notes about this reality.

Our reflections point to the need for the inclusion of a sensitive dynamic in the educational field, since this dimension overcomes the dominant, excluding rationalism, contemplating other dimensions that constitute human relations. We understand, therefore, that its political-pedagogical action advances in the construction of educational experiences based on the respect for diversity.

It is clear that the work with sensitivities enables a set of transgressions in the school context, since it acts based on the demythification of the backward conceptions that have historically granted violence in this territory. On the other hand, it proposes a critical formation,





based on a pedagogy that recognizes subjectivities, emotions, and affections as essential dimensions in the process of human formation.

It can be said, then, that the integration of this proposal broadens human experiences, since it rekindles other senses, as well as reestablishes the interlocution of fields that for a long time were conceived as antagonistic, as in the case of the relations between masculinities and sensibilities. In this way, its action allows the recovery of affections, emotions, and aesthetic perceptions that were stolen in the name of a modern rationality.

Once we transcend the limits imposed by modernity, we are able to establish dialogues based on the axis of differences. In this way, we realize that the performance of male teachers in Early Childhood Education, seen as an unconventional experience, given that it distances itself from hegemonic gender roles, is now considered possible.

Thus, in addition to overcoming the models crystallized throughout history, we realize that the work with sensitivities also provides opportunities for the constitution of other representations of masculinity, no longer based on the hegemonic model established by patriarchy. We believe that it is by following this path that we will be able to reject the sexist, and LGBTphobic discourses that have been pruning our reality.

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### How to reference this article

SILVA, M. A.; LAGE, A. C. Male and the exercise of men teachers in early childhood education: a reflection from the sensibilities. **Rev. @mbienteeducação**, São Paulo, v. 14, n. 3, p. 536-553, Sep./Dec. 2021. e-ISSN: 1982-8632. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26843/v14.n3.2021.1055.p536-553>

**Submitted:** 16/06/2021

**Required revisions:** 10/10/2021

**Approved:** 09/11/2021

**Published:** 16/12/2021

**Management of translations and versions:** Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.

**Translator:** Alexander Vinicius Leite da Silva.