

## **BRAZILIAN CHILDREN'S PARKS (1931 TO 1978)<sup>1</sup>**

### PARQUES INFANTIS BRASILEIROS (1931 A 1978)<sup>2</sup>

### PARQUES INFANTILES BRASILEÑOS (1931 A 1978)

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#### **Abstract**

*Parques Infantis* were educational institutions, serving children aged 3 to 12 years. In Brazil, they were transformed into Municipal Early Childhood Education Schools in the 1970s. Following this, the question was raised: what are the main academic works on the *Parques Infantis* that were established in Brazil? Considering the importance of understanding these institutions, which gave rise to the Municipal Early Childhood Education Schools. Therefore, the research objective was to present the historical elements of Brazilian *Parques Infantis*, focusing on the trends and academic works from 1931 to 1978. The methodological procedure involved a literature and documentary review. Among the findings, it was noted that the trends in academic works on *Parques Infantis* were related to various areas, and it was also possible to identify the most cited authors and the author with the most diverse texts on the institutions in question. Furthermore, it was found that the texts addressed various focuses and themes, with the most comprehensive research on the topic spanning from the 1930s to the 1970s, presenting a history of seven *Parques Infantis* that operated in Marília/SP.

**Keywords:** Integral Education. History of Education. Children's Parks. Education Schools.

#### **Resumo**

Os Parques Infantis foram instituições educativas, com atendimento de crianças de 3 a 12 anos. No Brasil, foram transformados em Escolas Municipais de Educação Infantil na década de 1970. A partir disso, foi realizada a seguinte problematização: quais as principais produções acadêmicas sobre os Parques Infantis que foram instalados no Brasil? Considerando a importância de compreender essas instituições, que originaram as Escolas Municipais de Educação Infantil. Com isso, o objetivo da pesquisa consistiu em apresentar elementos históricos dos Parques Infantis brasileiros, enfocando as tendências e produções acadêmicas no período de 1931 a 1978. Como procedimento metodológico, foi realizada revisão bibliográfica e documental. Dentre as constatações, destacam-se que as tendências

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das produções acadêmicas sobre os Parques Infantis estavam relacionadas com diversas áreas, também foi possível localizar as autoras mais citadas e o autor com maior diversidade de textos sobre as instituições em questão. Além disso, constatou-se que nos textos havia enfoques e temáticas diversas, sendo que a pesquisa mais abrangente sobre a temática se relaciona com a década de 1930 até a de 1970 e apresenta uma história de sete Parques Infantis que funcionaram em Marília/SP.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Integral. História da Educação. Parques Infantis. Educação Infantil.

### Resumen

Los Parques Infantiles eran instituciones educativas que atendían a niños de 3 a 12 años. En Brasil, se transformaron en Escuelas Municipales de Educación Infantil en la década de 1970. A partir de esto, se realizó la siguiente problematización: ¿cuáles son las principales producciones académicas sobre los Parques Infantiles que se crearon en Brasil? Considerando la importancia de comprender estas instituciones que dieron origen a las Escuelas Municipales de la Primera Infancia. Teniendo esto en cuenta, el objetivo de la investigación fue presentar elementos históricos de los parques infantiles brasileños, centrándose en las tendencias y producciones académicas de 1931 a 1978. Como procedimiento metodológico, se realizó una revisión bibliográfica y documental. Entre los hallazgos se encontró que las tendencias en la producción académica sobre parques infantiles se relacionaron con diversas áreas, y que también fue posible localizar a los autores más citados y al autor con mayor diversidad de textos sobre las instituciones en cuestión. Además, se constató que los textos tenían diferentes abordajes y temáticas, siendo que la investigación más completa sobre el tema se refería a las décadas de 1930 a 1970 y presentaba una historia de siete parques infantiles que funcionaron en Marília/SP.

**Palabras clave:** Educación Integral. Historia de la Educación. Parques Infantiles. Educación Infantil.

### Introduction

*Parques Infantis* were educational institutions that predominantly served children aged 3 to 12 years old. In Brazil, they were transformed into Municipal Early Childhood Education Schools (Emeis) in the 1970s, since in these institutions the configuration of contemporary Early Childhood Education prevailed.

Considering that in the educational field terminologies and stages are historical constructions, regarding Early Childhood Education it is important to clarify that in the Education Code of the State of São Paulo (São Paulo, 1933) the terminology Pre-Primary Education was introduced, highlighting that Early Childhood Education, which covered children up to 7 years old, aimed to develop Pre-Primary Education, composed of Kindergarten (ages 4 to 7) and Nursery School (ages 2 to 4). Kuhlmann Júnior (2000) reports that Nursery Schools slowly distanced themselves

from their connection to assisting people in poverty. In that code, daycares were not mentioned.

With the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN)/1961 (Brazil, 1961) this remained, however, the term Early Childhood Education was not mentioned, only Pre-Primary Education.

From Law 5692 of 1971 (Brazil, 1971), Primary School became designated as first grade school (beginning at age 7) and no term was defined for education for children under 7, although it was noted that these children could attend Nursery Schools, Kindergartens, or other institutions.

Kishimoto (1986) presents that in Opinion 792 of 1980 from the Federal Education Council, the term Preschool Education was declared for children under 7 years old. According to Kishimoto (1986), this terminology had been discussed and institutionalized by the Ministry of Education and Culture and by the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP), and thus the terminology had been incorporated into official documents.

With the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil (Brazil, 1988), the terms "daycare" (creche) and "Preschool" were included as a "social right," from birth to 6 years old, later amended to up to 5 years old. Consequently, Brazilian educational policy for daycare institutions was established in legislation.

Despite this recognition of daycares as belonging to the first stage of Basic Education, in 1932, in labor legislation, daycares had already been made mandatory in establishments with at least 30 women over 16 years of age. However, this law was not enforced (Kuhlmann Júnior, 2005).

With the LDBEN/96 (Brazil, 1996), the term "daycare" (creche) also appeared, referring to Early Childhood Education for children from infancy to 3 years old, and "Preschool," initially for children from 4 to 6 years old, later adjusted in 2013 to 4 to 5 years old. It is noteworthy that Brazilian legislation does not include the term nursery.

Similarly, in these legislations, there is no terminology for *Parques Infantis*, considered non-formal institutions. Even though they were not registered in the official documents used, these institutions enabled an integral education, differing

from existing educational institutions of the period.

An education that continued in their space as Early Childhood Education institutions. Thus, the significant relationship between *Parques Infantis* and Early Childhood Education is constant. In this sense, it is important to understand the characteristics of *Parques Infantis*, considering that when presenting works on this theme in scientific events, questions frequently arise asking for clarification of these institutions, unknown to many.

It is emphasized that, historically, there have been changes in the way education is conceived, and consequently, terminological changes have occurred, which at certain moments constitute ruptures or continuities with the present.

The origins of institutions related to Early Childhood Education were not Brazilian and were based on the concept of institutions that protected, cared for, and kept the child safe—like a nest or a manger—that welcomed them so that later the little ones could bloom in a beautiful and pleasurable garden.

The child was seen as in need of care in the early stages of life in order to survive, without concern for educating, which was believed to begin only once the child could walk and talk. Currently, based on studies, especially those grounded in Historical-Cultural Theory, this conception is outdated among educators, considering the specificities of Early Childhood Education, in which pedagogical offerings, from the earliest age, involve care that educates and education that cares.

Until the 1930s, the decade in which *Parques Infantis* were established in the state of São Paulo, institutions that served children up to 7 years old in this state—namely, Early Childhood Education institutions—included: orphanages that cared for orphaned and abandoned children (assistance-based); daycares for orphans or children of workers under 2 years old (assistance-based); Nursery Schools for children aged 2 to 4 years (with assistance-based origins, later becoming educational); and Kindergartens that served children aged 4 to 7 years (educational).

The principles of Early Childhood Education, specifically those of Kindergartens, were present in Brazilian *Parques Infantis*, since Nicanor Miranda, director of the Division of Education and Recreation, which oversaw the *Parques Infantis*, was inspired by Froebel in the organization of these institutions,

emphasizing games and manual activities. Froebel connected family and State in such a way that the child could spend some hours with the family and others with a children's community, experiencing nature and learning (Miranda, 1941).

Based on this, the aim of the research, whose results are presented in this article, was to highlight the historical elements of Brazilian *Parques Infantis*, focusing on academic trends and productions in the period from 1931 to 1978, corresponding to the earliest and most recent years of the establishment and transformation of *Parques Infantis* into Emeis.

As a methodological procedure, through a historical approach centered on bibliographic and documentary review, research was conducted on the History of Education, focusing on *Parques Infantis*, through the location, identification, recovery, collection, systematization, selection, analysis, and interpretation of sources on the subject.

It is worth noting that to interpret means "[...] to construct meaning for a discourse, for a text, and the validity of this interpretation is measured by its depth and by the consistency and coherence of its arguments" (Geraldi, 2012, p. 34).

For the bibliographic review, the descriptors "*Parque infantil*" and "*Parques Infantis*" were used, focusing on the state of São Paulo, where these institutions began in Brazil. Based on this, texts were selected that addressed *Parques Infantis* as institutions and not as playgrounds in urban spaces. It should be noted that although *Parques Infantis* included playgrounds, they were not limited to them.

With the descriptors presented, the following sources were consulted: the catalog of theses and dissertations of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), the database of the São Paulo State University (UNESP) Athena Catalog, the collection of Brazilian scientific journals of the electronic library Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), the database of the University of São Paulo (USP), the database of the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), the collection of the Library of the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar), the database of Microsoft Academic Search, and the History of Education and Childhood page of the Carlos Chagas Foundation (FCC), all available online.

In addition, texts on *Parques Infantis* presented at scientific events in the field

of History of Education, as well as references from the texts located on the subject, were also sought. The results of the research conducted are presented below.

### **Literature Review on *Parques Infantis*: Trends and Academic Production**

The research located on Parques Infantis is related to the fields of Education, Physical Education, History, Social Sciences, Psychology, and Architecture. These texts include articles published in journals, books, theses, dissertations, undergraduate final papers (TCCs), texts published in the proceedings of scientific events in the field of the History of Education, and reviews.

The citations in these texts recurrently mention the authors Ana Lúcia Goulart de Faria and her doctoral advisor Tizuko Morchida Kishimoto. It is important to highlight that Goulart de Faria, in her dissertation, points out that the research she conducted was not within the scope of the History of Early Childhood Education, but rather in the field of Social Sciences, based on the understanding that educational institutions are also social institutions. Furthermore, the author with the widest diversity of texts, covering various elements of the Parques Infantis, is Moysés Kuhlmann Júnior.

Categorizing the research located, it is possible to consider that there are three major differences among the studies conducted on Parques Infantis: one difference lies in the negative emphasis given only by Filizzola (2002a; 2002b) and Guedes (2006), who highlight that the Parques Infantis were institutions that disciplined people living in poverty, aiming at social domination in order to achieve the modernization of Brazil.

Another difference consists in not attributing either a negative or a positive focus to the Parques Infantis, emphasizing instead that they were institutions that worked with control, discipline, recreation, and culture. As Kuhlmann Júnior (2019, p. 1) mentions: “[...] it is not enough to label them as promoters of culture and citizenship, or conversely, of control and discipline, since both dimensions can be identified in the elements present in their proposals”.

Finally, the third difference lies in the emphasis on the positive elements of these institutions, such as the possibility of providing an education that encompassed

multiple dimensions, highlighting recreation, the knowledge of Brazilian folklore, and the production of culture.

The research and themes that focus on the positive elements of the Parques Infantis are presented in Table 1 below, organized first by the themes with the highest number of studies located, followed by organization from the most recent to the oldest. When there was the same number of studies on a given theme, published in the same year, the third criterion of organization was alphabetic order.

**Chart 1** – Themes and Authors of Research on *Parques Infantis* in the State of São Paulo

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>AUTHORS</b>
Institutions in Different Cities	Conceição (2022); Onuki (2019); Cunha (2018); Cunha e Kuhlmann Júnior (2017); Ferreira, D. (2015); Kuhlmann Júnior e Fernandes (2014); Prandi (2015); Gobbi (2012); Oliveira (2010); Leme (2008); Pereira, M. (2008); Vieira (2004); Tonolli (1996) and Fonseca, J. (1985)
Physical Education and Leisure	Fonseca, S.; Ferreira, D. e Prandi (2015); Pizani (2012); Berto; Ferreira Neto e Schneider (2009); Dalben e Danailof (2009); Micaroni e Kuhlmann Júnior (2008); Danailof (2006, 2013) and Niemeyer (2001 e 2002)
Mário de Andrade	Arantes (2008); Faria (1993, 1999, 1999) and Abdanur (1994)
Drawings	Ferreira e Wiggers (2019) and Gobbi (2004)
Art	Brito (2016)
Health/Hygiene and Recreation	Grindler (2015) and Gonçalves (2010)
Architecture	Wilderom (2014)
Comparison with Other Types of Institutions	Silva, S. (2012) and Amaral (2007)
Music	Paiva (2009)
Photographic Album of Parques Infantis	Silva, C. (2008)
Special Education	Filócomo (2005)

Training of Parques Infantis Educators	Santos (2005)
Childhood	Ferreira de Paula (1993)
Origins of <i>Parques Infantis</i>	Miranda (1941)

Source: prepared by the author.

The research focusing on the institutions is related to the following cities: Marília/SP (from 1937 to 1978); Santos/SP (from 1930 to the 1970 and from 1931 to 1952); São Paulo (from 1935 to 1985); Araraquara/SP (from 1941 to 1971); Campinas/SP (from 1939 to 1981); Ribeirão Preto/SP (from 1951 to 1980); Sorocaba/SP (from 1954 to the 1970s); and Cubatão/SP (from 1956 to 1966).

The documentary sources used by researchers studying Parques Infantis mainly consist of articles published in scientific journals of the period. Among these are articles published in the Revista do Arquivo Municipal (published since 1933 and used by the Department of Culture to disseminate activities conducted); in the Revista de Educação Física (by the Army); in Revista de Educação Física; in articles from the Internal Bulletin of the Division of Education, Assistance, and Recreation of the Municipal Department of Culture of São Paulo (used as one of the tools for the training of Parques Infantis educators, published from 1947 to 1957); texts published in newspapers; documents contained in institutional archives; interviews conducted with people who attended the *Parques Infantis*; and photographs.

Among the photographs, those taken by Benedito Junqueira Duarte, a photographer hired by the Department of Culture and brother of Paulo Duarte (who will be mentioned later), were used. The photographs date from the 1930 to the 1940 and record daily life in the parks. There are also photographs of *Parques Infantis* in the photographic collection of the São Paulo City Museum.

Most of the research conducted had the 1930s as the starting period, when the *Parques Infantis* were established in the state of São Paulo. As can be seen in Chart 2 below, which is organized according to the order from the oldest to the most recent studies:



**Chart 2 – Periods Studied in Research on Parques Infantis in the State of São Paulo**

RESEARCHED DECADES	YEARS STUDIED	AUTHORS AND YEAR OF PUBLICATION
<b>Prior to the 1930s to the 1940</b>	18th Century to 1940	Miranda (1941)
<b>1930</b>	1935 to 1938	Faria (1993, 1999, 1999); Abdanur (1994); Filizzola (2002a, 2002b); Gobbi (2004, 2012); Vieira (2004); Danailof (2006, 2013); Guedes (2006); Amaral (2007); Arantes (2008); Gonçalves (2010); Silva, S. (2012) and Grindler (2015)
	1935 to 1937	Fonseca, J. (1985)
	1937 to 1938	Brito (2016)
<b>1930 to 1970</b>	1930 to 1940	Silva, C. (2008); Berto, Ferreira Neto and Schneider (2009), Dalben; Danailof (2009)
	1930 to 1945	Ferreira de Paula (1993)
	1930 to 1977	Cunha e Kuhlmann Júnior (2017); Cunha (2018); Ferreira, F.; Wiggers (2019)
	1935 to 1955	Santos (2005)
	1935 to 1970	Niemeyer (2001, 2002)
	1935 to 2013	Wilderom (2014)
	1937 to 1978	Conceição (2022)
<b>1940 a 1960</b>	1940 to 1960	Pizani (2012)
	1941 to 1971	Pereira, M. (2008)
	1942 to 1947	Tonolli (1996)
	1942 to 1981	Leme (2008)
	1947 to 1957	Filócomo (2005); Micaroni; Kuhlmann Júnior (2008); Paiva (2009); Kuhlmann Júnior and Fernandes (2014)
<b>1940 a 1970</b>	1950 to 1960	Ferreira, D. (2015); Fonseca, S.; Ferreira; Prandi (2015) and Prandi (2015)

	1954 to 1970	Oliveira (2010); Onuki (2019)
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Source: prepared by the author.

According to Chart 2, it is possible to observe that 17 studies cover the period from 1935 to 1938, when Mário de Andrade directed the Department of Culture, which was responsible for the *Parques Infantis*, while in 13 studies the 1930s are not addressed. According to Kuhlmann Júnior (2017), this body underwent changes and was later named the Secretariat of Education and Hygiene, and subsequently the Secretariat of Education and Culture.

Mário de Andrade enabled the enrichment of an education that considered the child as a child and as a producer of knowledge, not merely as a student or a future adult — an education that did not discriminate based on social origin and recognized “[...] the existence of various types of knowledge (scientific, artistic, academic, non-academic, etc.)” (Faria, 1999, p. 195).

Regarding the scope of the research, the study conducted by Wilderom (2014) covered the period from 1935 to 2013; however, its focus was not on the *Parques Infantis*, but on the Unified Educational Center (CEU), and it relates to the *Parques Infantis* to understand the school architecture of the CEU. This study was carried out within the field of architecture rather than education.

The research conducted by Conceição (2022), a result of doctoral research, is the most comprehensive among the studies located, covering the 1930s up to 1978, with a focus on all *Parques Infantis* that operated in the city of Marília/SP (seven institutions), rather than a specific one.

It is noteworthy that research covering all *Parques Infantis* operating in a city was found in only three dissertations: Ferreira, D. (2015) and Prandi (2015), both supervised by Professor Dr. Sérgio César da Fonseca, which present the implementation and construction of the image of the *Parques Infantis* in Ribeirão Preto/SP during the 1950s and 1960s; and Pizani (2012), supervised by Dr. Silvia Cristina Amaral Franco, which presents the *Parques Infantis* and *Recantos Infantis* (smaller institutions in physical size than the *Parques Infantis*), created from 1940 in Campinas/SP, between the 1940s and 1960s.

Conceição's (2022) thesis is also notable for presenting, in its appendix, two research instruments on the *Parques Infantis* that may be used in future related studies.

Thus, the research developed by Conceição (2022) allows for a better analysis of the ruptures and continuities of the *Parques Infantis* over time and the diversity realized in the operation of seven institutions. It is understood that the quantity and long period of operation of the institutions studied demand constant challenges, from the recovery of sources to the interpretation and recording of the histories of the researched institutions.

### **Services in the *Parques Infantis***

According to Miranda (1941), the *Parques Infantis* are related to the movement that occurred in Germany after the Franco-Prussian War, in which two teachers took students to a square twice a week to engage in motor games.

The spread of the *Parques Infantis* occurred in the Americas, specifically in the United States, and in some European cities that also became interested in this initiative, including cities in countries such as the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland, and France. Additionally, Canada, Mexico, Cuba, Uruguay, and Chile had *Parques Infantis* built in their main cities.

Most Brazilian *Parques Infantis* were public, but there were also private initiatives. These institutions were influenced by the thinking of educator Fernando de Azevedo, who was associated with the New School movement and concerned with health, as he believed that Physical Education would develop health, agility, and robustness (Filizzola, 2002b).

Physical Education was used as a North American concept, based on European schools, involving medical assistance, scientific research related to the student, family, and environmental conditions (Miranda, 1941).

Fernando de Azevedo stated that he was the one who had the idea of the *Parques Infantis*<sup>4</sup>:

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<sup>4</sup> In 1933, Fernando de Azevedo enacted the Education Code as General Director of Public Instruction of the State of São Paulo.

[...] in my youth campaigns for Physical Education in the country, as I was also the author of the project that Firminiano Pinto requested from a commission he had established to develop the plan for the first children's playgrounds, which was then intended to be created in Ipiranga, on land donated for this purpose to the City Hall by the Jafet family, which remained on paper. I am pleased to see the extraordinary quantitative growth that the Parques Infantis, Recantos, and children's recreation areas have achieved, which today are integrated into the Department of Education, Assistance, and Recreation" (Speech..., 1961, p. 61).

The origins of these institutions in Brazil occurred in São Paulo in 1931, with the first park named *Parque de Jogos Infantis* "Dom Pedro II", which was under public administration. From 1930 to 1931, São Paulo was governed by Mayor Anhaia Melo, who also initiated the construction of parks located in the Lapa and Ipiranga neighborhoods. From 1934 to 1938, Fábio Prado served as mayor of São Paulo, and during his administration the *Parque Infantil* de Santo Amaro was inaugurated (Filizzola, 2002b).

Filizzola (2002b, p. 46) describes that Fábio Prado stated that the creation of the *Parques Infantis* took place during his administration, but he mentions Anhaia Melo, reporting that some earlier trials had been conducted, highlighting the ambiguity.

[...] the creation of the institution rests precisely on the distinction established by Mayor [Fábio Prado] in relation to the proposal for Parques Infantis created during Anhaia Melo's administration: according to the new conception of Parques Infantis outlined during his term, the institution was 'completely organized,' receiving even 'scientific guidance, without which nothing productive or efficient could be accomplished.

Fábio Prado attributed a scientific character to the *Parques Infantis*, transforming an existing project and beginning to value research and experience. Considering that he was an industrial owner concerned with the care of workers' children, as Kuhlmann Júnior (2000) records, since December 1920 the São Paulo labor law required the establishment of *Escolas Maternais* to serve the children of workers. Consequently, daycare centers and Pre-Primary institutions were created during industrialization, as workers' children needed places to stay while their parents worked.

With the beginning of Fábio Prado's administration in 1934, based on the experience of the *Parques de Jogos Infantis*, the Municipal Recreation Commission

was created, whose competence was to coordinate issues related to the parks and public gardens.

Between 1926 and 1931, a group of intellectuals who believed that modernizing the Brazilian population required educational reform met weekly at Paulo Duarte's apartment to discuss various topics of interest related to art (Filizzola, 2002b).

This group wished for these meetings to be organized and perpetuated for others with government funding. Among these intellectuals was Mário de Andrade, a poet and pianist with Marxist influence, associated with the Modernist Movement of 1922.

The aspirations of this group were realized in 1935 when Mayor Fábio Prado, with the advice of Paulo Duarte, created the Department of Culture in São Paulo, which, as mentioned, was directed by Mário de Andrade from 1935 to 1938.

The parks operating during this period under the Department of Culture, led by Mário de Andrade, were "Dom Pedro II," Lapa, Ipiranga, and "Santo Amaro" (Niemeyer, 2002). It is noteworthy that the *Parques Infantis* were not initiated by the Department of Education, which was only established in the São Paulo City Hall in 1956 (Fonseca, J., 1985).

Nicanor Miranda was appointed director of the Division of Education and Recreation, which, as reported, included the *Parques Infantis*, and he replaced the term *Parques de Jogos Infantis*, proposed by Fernando de Azevedo, with *Parques Infantis*, because people confused the term "jogos" with gambling (Niemeyer, 2002).

The *Parques Infantis* in Brazil were created in São Paulo and enabled the beginning of the Early Childhood Education network (as they were later transformed into Emeis), being the first Brazilian educational experience for children from working-class families. At that time, the order was to modernize and implement social reform. The reorganization of the *Parques Infantis* and their incorporation into the Department of Culture occurred when Fábio Prado assumed the city's mayoralty (Niemeyer, 2001). In the *Parques Infantis* of 1930s São Paulo, children of both sexes, aged 3 to 12, and children of workers, were served in the morning and/or afternoon,

opposite to the regular school schedule. Those not attending school could stay all day in the park.

From 1937, during the evening, the *Parques Infantis* spaces were transformed into Workers' Youth Clubs and/or Girls' Centers, intended for the leisure of young workers aged 13 to 21, specifically for recreation and Physical Education, aiming to keep them away from crime. Attendance during the day and evening was recorded only for internal control, with no minimum attendance required (Faria, 1999).

The *Parques Infantis* operated from Monday to Saturday. On Sundays, events were held with the participation of workers' families. It is noteworthy that there were also foreign families, and at the *Parque Infantil "Dom Pedro II"*, most children were foreign, mostly Italian, followed by Brazilian and Spanish (Vieira, 2004).

Although they focused on workers' children, the emphasis of these institutions was on the child, not the mother's right to work. Considering that the *Parques Infantis* of this period were neither schools nor existing Preschools, but non-formal institutions providing education, care, and leisure for working-class children, they integrated Physical Education, culture, and health, reinforcing nationality and immersing children in national folklore, games, and play (including traditional games). They enabled children's right to childhood, without contact with systematic pre-literacy, but through play, artistic experiences, and not work (Faria, 1999).

The *Parques Infantis* of São Paulo consisted of open spaces with lawns and trees. There were playgrounds for recreation and gymnastics, such as seesaws, carousels, and slides, as well as sandpits, pools, dining patios, libraries, and one or two rooms for various activities.

Among the professionals working in the *Parques Infantis* were administrators, instructors, physical educators, dentists, and doctors. From 1936, a public health educator also made home visits to the children to prevent illness, thus integrating culture, education, and health.

The instructors, called "recreators," sought to "[...] act pedagogically, based on an extensive and inviting play program [...]" (Niemeyer, 2001, p. 83). The *Parques Infantis* were like public squares, offering entertainment, leisure, education, and

children's cultural productions, with professionals trained to teach children how to play (Faria, 1999).

Analyzing the children's artistic activities in the *Parques Infantis* of São Paulo in 1937 and 1938, it is evident that they engaged in dance, painting, drawing, and gardening; boys practiced woodworking, and girls did modeling and crafts. There were also drawing contests, and the children's works, with their names and ages, were sent to the Department of Culture, with the top three winners receiving cash prizes to buy what they wished, along with their instructors (Gobbi, 2004).

According to Miranda (1941), the *Parques Infantis* provided education and care. However, they were not welfare institutions, as they focused on education, considering the human being as a whole, in which physical and intellectual growth are part of the same historical and social process. These institutions combined care and education, aiming for children in poverty to survive and contribute to a better Brazil.

Brito (2016), based on Miranda's records, states that the *Parque Infantil* was an open-air school that should provide physical, moral, and intellectual knowledge through recreation. It was a place where children ate, bathed, learned, and expressed themselves artistically and physically.

Mário de Andrade sought to integrate mind, body, cognition, affection, and emotion, arguing that poverty should not be treated poorly, because "[...] by thinking one is not educating, there is a risk of educating only for order and discipline, thus merely reproducing labor power" (Faria, 1999, p. 206). He sought a national identity that included folklore, and according to Leme (2008), Paulo Duarte from the Department of Culture referred to Mário de Andrade's thinking as a search for *brasilidade*.

Through the *Parques Infantis*, children had the opportunity to humanize themselves through experiences and human knowledge mediated by the historical, social, and cultural content of their environment, fostering development.

For Guedes (2006), studies on the *Parques Infantis* emphasize only the benefits, not revealing their disciplinary aspect, which occurred through Physical

Education aimed at training for industrial work. Additionally, moral education was implemented, for example, through parties.

This author presents a mistaken view of the functions of the *Parques Infantis* and the activities carried out there. For instance, she argues that there was no concern with writing and wrongly interprets this as negative, disregarding the importance of play for children's education (Guedes, 2006).

She criticizes involvement "only in recreational activities," emphasizing that "[...] it was acceptable, and even desirable, for the worker to be illiterate, but it was essential that they possessed vitality and health for work [...]" (Guedes, 2006, p. 134). Thus, she argues that the *Parques Infantis* exercised social control, but also carried formative potential (Guedes, 2006).

Filizzola (2002a, 2002b) also highlights the disciplinary nature of the *Parques Infantis* of the 1930s, emphasizing that they appropriated the free time of children of workers and foreigners, aiming to meet the needs of the bourgeoisie by standardizing and instilling moral values, good manners, and physical and cultural discipline, preparing children for work through organized leisure.

Filizzola (2002a, 2002b) argues that the educational proposals of the *Parques Infantis* aligned with the desires of industrialists, doctors, and educators. She emphasizes that children were served up to the age of 13, while the 1934 Federal Constitution established legal working age at 14.

She considers these spaces opposed to children's education at home, on the streets, and in schools, and that "[...] to organize and control the children of workers, it was necessary for the municipal government to produce discourses legitimizing the need for them to be in closed institutions rather than in open public squares or even on the streets" (Filizzola, 2002b, p. 295). She defends that streets are spaces for play.

Faria (1999, p. 84) argues that despite the *Parques Infantis* "[...] and the Department of Culture itself serving to discipline the leisure of the working class, they also guarantee the right to free time through the public space planned for this purpose," a space not guaranteed without the *Parques Infantis*, as evidenced in an interview excerpt presented by Filizzola (2002b, p. 232):



I have a son, Felipe, who, so as not to stay on the street, I asked a woodcutter to teach him the trade without receiving anything, and he learned. Later, he worked at his house, and then moved elsewhere. But then Mr. Venerando, the woodcutter, called him again, and he went. After that, he went to join the army [...]

Without the *Parques Infantis*, leisure would not be guaranteed solely by free time, and children in poverty could lose the right to be children. Santos (2005, p. 153-154) asks:

[...] would experiences in tenements or on the street be sufficient to develop a critical mindset among workers and their children? Would creating an environment with the structure of a Parque Infantil, including doctors, dentists, educators, a pool, a garden, space, toys, and meals, reveal manipulation behind its objectives? And even if this intention were explicit, would it have been effective?

The author responds that, according to interviews conducted, the *Parques Infantis* were essential for the attendees, since “[...] in no testimony were there signs of discontent or discomfort, as would be natural if there were emphasis on control” (Santos, 2005, p. 178). Thus, the *Parques Infantis* were perceived as spaces for socialization, education, and promotion of physical and social inclusion, with experiences that brought pleasure.

In the 1940s, the *Parques Infantis* expanded to the interior of São Paulo, the Federal District, Amazonas, Bahia, Minas Gerais, Recife, and Rio Grande do Sul (Kuhlmann Júnior, 2000). In 1974, with the creation of EMEIs (Municipal Early Childhood Education Centers) in the state of São Paulo, the objectives of the *Parques Infantis* related to play, traditional games, and artistic activities were eliminated, as EMEIs “[...] have an increasing tendency to adopt the school model. The original *Parques Infantis* project aimed to criticize the school of the time and propose to complement it” (Faria, 1999, p. 157), integrating care and education.

The *Parques Infantis* in the city of São Paulo operated until 1975, when they were transformed into EMEIs, serving only children aged 3 to 7 years (Faria, 1999). In the countryside, some municipalities maintained these institutions for a longer period; in Marília/SP, for example, the *Parques Infantis* were converted into EMEIs only in 1978.

In the 1970s, the transformation of *Parques Infantis* into EMEIs coincided with the slow expansion of Early Childhood Education in Brazil, linked to the educational systems and partly “[...] connected to health and social assistance agencies, with indirect contact with the educational area” (Kuhlmann Júnior, 2005, p. 182). By the end of the 20th century, the expansion of Early Childhood Education accelerated, and all institutions became linked to educational authorities, with formulations from 1990 onwards emphasizing the inseparability of care and education.

This study contextualized the characterization and origin of Parques Infantis in Brazil, following Faria’s perspective (1999), according to whom studying these institutions contributes to the formulation of Early Childhood Education policies that defend children’s rights, allowing them to produce and appropriate culture, being protagonists in the space they attend.

## **Final considerations**

Studying *Parques Infantis*, educational institutions that operated until the 1970s, helps to understand the history of Early Childhood Education, especially since they were later transformed into EMEIs. Academic studies on Parques Infantis (1931–1978) show relationships with Education, Physical Education, History, Social Sciences, Psychology, and Architecture. The contributions of Ana Lúcia Goulart de Faria, Tizuko Morchida Kishimoto, and Moysés Kuhlmann Júnior are particularly recurrent.

Research approaches vary between negative, positive, and balanced analyses, with the positive approach being predominant, covering themes such as: “Institutions in different cities,” “Physical Education and Leisure,” “Mário de Andrade,” “Drawings,” “Art,” “Architecture,” “Comparison with other types of institutions,” “Music,” “Photographic Album of *Parques Infantis*,” “Special Education,” “Training of Children’s Park Educators,” “Childhood,” and “Origin of *Parques Infantis*.”

Studies identified Parques Infantis in Marília/SP, Santos/SP, São Paulo, Araraquara/SP, Campinas/SP, Ribeirão Preto/SP, Sorocaba/SP, and Cubatão/SP. Among these, Conceição’s research (2022), resulting from her doctoral thesis, is the

most comprehensive, covering 1930 to 1978 and considering all Parques Infantis in Marília/SP, not just a specific institution. The author also presented, in an appendix, two research instruments that can be used in future studies.

Research on *Parques Infantis* allows a better understanding of current practices, evaluation of advances and setbacks, the connection between macro and micro issues, recognition of the possibility of changes, and conscious planning for a desired future.

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