

<b>Institution:</b> Queen Mary University of London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26B Modern Languages and Linguistics		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Transforming approaches to homophobia and gender inequality in Brazil's rural schools		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2002-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Else Vieira	Professor Brazilian and Comparative Latin American Studies	2002-Present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016-2019		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Professor Vieira's research has challenged attitudes on gender amongst staff and students in schools in agrarian communities in Brazil and has led to changes in curricula and pedagogy. It has promoted increased awareness of the issues within schools and communities, and amongst stakeholders including providers of pedagogical training in higher education. These shifts have been borne out of Vieira's research on the cultural self-expression of Brazil's landless social segment, which challenged gender inequality and conservative responses to the country's 2013 legalisation of same sex conjugality. This underpinned the development of a series of workshops with adolescent students in Brazil's agrarian reform settlements, as well as training sessions with secondary school teachers and undergraduate students of Education. The workshops have produced tangible changes in students' and staff's attitudes towards the sexual division of labour, and the reduction of incidences of homophobia in the schools. Significantly, the approach developed in these workshops, and Vieira's subsequent findings, have also laid the foundations for the introduction of countryside-specific gender issues in secondary schools' syllabi.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>The Landless Voices project, led by Vieira, has produced a body of research on the forms of cultural self-expression of Brazil's landless social segment, comprising 20 million people. The project initially featured the self-expression of landless people in the formative years of The Movement of the Landless Rural Workers of Brazil (MST), which was set up in 1984, and developed into the country's (and Latin America's) largest social movement [3.1]. Vieira's research brought to light their subjectivities and responses to the escalating social tragedy of landlessness, their traumas and achievements in the struggle for land. In 2003, this resulted in a web-enabled bilingual database <i>The Sights and Sounds of Dispossession: The Fight for the Land and the Emerging Culture of the MST</i> [3.1, 3.2, 3.3]. The database [5.9], launched in the House of Commons and the Vila Campesina in January 2003, created an international platform for the landless social segment as protagonists of their own history. The research revealed that collective creation is an essential element of their social cohesion and political engagement [3.2], within which countryside-specific education plays a significant role [3.3, 3.4, 3.5].</p> <p>In 2013, Vieira collaborated with Sônia Schwendler (Federal University of Paraná) and Bernardo Mançano Fernandes (São Paulo's UNESCO Chair in Territorial Development and Education for the Countryside) on visits to four schools in agrarian reform settlements in southern Brazil. During fieldwork, participating adolescents proposed a new research theme focused on the particularly aggressive oppression of homosexuals in the countryside [3.3]. Vieira's research revealed that the following contextual factors underlie this:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brazil's judiciary legalisation of same-sex marriage in May 2013</li> <li>• the media, produced in urban centres and now reaching the more conservative countryside in real time, over-projected the legal change</li> </ul>		

- the ultra-conservative caucus in Congress's fierce attacks on the initially progressive National Education Plan in 2010, which recommended the promotion, via school curricula, of gender and sexual equality
- the reactive 'School Without Party Bill' (Bill 7180/2014) which legalised parents' surveillance and denouncement of teachers who address gender in the classroom [3.4] [3.5].

Following this, Vieira and Schwendler carried out in-depth research on rural adolescent students' perceptions of generational tensions related to gender diversity and the sexual division of labour in the state of Paraná, which includes over 300 settlements of agrarian reform [3.4]. The research was conducted in two schools in prominent settlements: the Iraci Salete Strozak School in Rio Bonito do Iguaçu, which is also the base for nine itinerant schools serving 67 encampments (2,500 students); and the historical Contestado settlement, renowned for its successful struggle for land and education reform (150 students in primary and secondary education).

The research identified major clashes between the adolescents' positive responses to Brazil's legalisation of same-sex marriages and identification with the urban media's progressive projections of the legal change in 2013-14, and their parents' over-reactive resistance to discussion of non-normative sexualities [3.4]. A programme of seminars, involving teachers from 27 schools in agrarian reform settlement/encampments alongside undergraduate students of Education, revealed teachers' and schools' unpreparedness, theoretically and in terms of educational resources, to work with gender issues in compliance with international Human Rights and recommendations from the National Curriculum Parameters to include gender issues in the state's secondary school syllabi [3.4].

### 3. References to the research

[3.1] Vieira, E. R. P. (2007). Enhancing cultural studies through the web mode of organization and publication of archives. *International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society*, 115-27. <https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/handle/123456789/61662>

[3.2] Vieira, E. (2007). Music, poetry and the politicization of the landless identity. In *In Landless Voices in Song and Poetry. The Movimento dos Sem Terra of Brazil (Anthology)*. Compiled and annotated by Else RP Vieira. Translated by Bernard McGuirk. Co-edited by Bernard McGuirk and Else RP Vieira. CCC Press. <https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/handle/123456789/56662>

[3.3] Vieira, E. R. (2015). The landless voices database: A trajectory from cultural studies to pedagogical impact. *Educar em Revista*, (55), 69-86. [dx.doi.org/10.1590/0104-4060.39850](https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-4060.39850)

[3.4] Vieira, E. R. P. (2019). The impact project 'Gender and Education' in rural Brazil. *The International Journal of Humanities Education*, 17(2), 17-37. <https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/handle/123456789/61629>

[3.5] Vieira, E. R. P. (2020). Free to think, free to sing: a new generation of Landless Voices, on gender diversity. In Vieira, E. R. P. (Ed.) *Landless Voices, a New Generation. The Movimento dos Sem Terra of Brazil in Song and Poetry*. Transl. Bernard McGuirk. SPLASH

### Evidence of quality of research

[EQR.3.4] Vieira, E. [PI]. (2015-2017). Gender and Education in Brazil's Rural Areas [AF150000]. *Newton Trust, British Academy*. GBP64,457.00.

#### 4. Details of the impact

Vieira's research has led to changes in school environments amongst landless communities in Brazil related to issues of gender equity, sexuality and gender diversity/homophobia. This has had an impact on students, teachers, and educational decision-makers, and has contributed towards the realisation of a number of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, including Quality Education (UN SDG 4) and Gender Equality (UN SDG 5).

##### Increased students' understanding of gender roles and sexuality

In 2015 and 2016, Vieira and Schwendler used their research on gender-related intergenerational tensions to develop and carry-out four sets of workshops with students, and two rounds of seminars with teachers in southern Brazil. The workshops took place with the Rural State Schools Iraci Salete Strozak and Contestado in the state of Paraná and included 150 students between the ages of 14-17, with an additional 30 students in the fourth visit in 2018. Through an introduction to debates on gender and sexuality, and the analysis of contemporary media, such as soap operas, the workshops raised participants' awareness of gender inequality and homophobia in the countryside, and, particularly, older generations' misconceptions about gender diversity.

Participating students confirmed that the workshops strengthened their understanding of the sexual division of labour and its relationship to their family cultures. They stressed that the workshops opened their minds to the acceptance of, and respect for, gender diversity, something that had been mostly repressed by their families [5.3, 5.4]. Students reported:

- 'When I got home and talked to my [parents] they understood that things can change'
- 'My ways of thinking changed a lot. Before you came here, I would think, for example, some work is for women [...] then I realised it is not like that.'
- 'I talked to my father and [explained] old times were like that [where] women were [...] taking care of the house, but nowadays, not anymore, [women] have more rights.'

Students also noted improvements in managing their home-lives, especially in relation to the sexual division of labour [5.3] and they also reported long term benefits, with one student expressing that, because of the workshops, 'homosexuals are better accepted in the schools now' [5.4]. This statement was confirmed by the Headmaster of one of the schools,

'[The] School has become accommodating compared to others; many students who went to other schools returned because they encountered prejudice and felt uncomfortable elsewhere' [5.2].

##### Changing teachers' views on gender diversity and improved social inclusion

Under Vieira and Schwendler's supervision, and drawing on their research findings and methods, the students created pedagogical resources related to countryside-specific issues of equity regarding gender and sexuality. These were then disseminated to secondary school teachers in the countryside through teacher-training seminars. In 2016 and 2017, the researchers ran two 3-day seminars in Paraná's capital, Curitiba. The seminars provided 70 secondary school teachers from 27 of Paraná's countryside schools - who had no background knowledge on the sexual division of labour and gender diversity - with new knowledge and training on the teaching of gender issues. The seminars and accompanying study aids enabled the teachers to communicate complex theoretical ideas on gender in the everyday language used in the countryside, which made those ideas more accessible to their students. As feedback gathered from teachers and trainees afterwards makes clear the seminars and materials helped them to recognise and revise their own prejudices [5.5, 5.6]:

- 'I will revise my prejudices'
- 'When planning my lessons, I will introduce reflections on [gender diversity]'
- 'Every term I will include gender diversity in my lessons'

- 'I will talk more about the topic and use the materials to develop the students' critical knowledge, to teach them to be more open-minded and take this knowledge beyond the school walls'
- 'I will not divide the work in class between boys and girls'
- 'Homosexuality will be seen in a different light and not as an illness'
- 'I need to change my teaching practices'
- 'I will give awareness talks and talk to the students individually'.

The positive outcome of this initial phase of work enabled the researchers to further develop a series of follow-up workshops with the schools in 2018, and, upon teachers' request, added a school in Ortigueiras's Liberdade Camponesa settlement to the project. This round of activities placed particular emphasis on the need to address significant issues of homophobia in the countryside.

By working directly with students and teachers, Vieira has been able to not only raise awareness of homophobia, but to also bring about changes in teaching and learning environments as a result. As the Headmaster of the Iraci Salete Strosak School, located in a highly conservative area, makes clear, prior to the training 'some teachers misconceived sexual diversity as a disease', but that the training and workshops helped them to think differently about sexual diversity [5.2]. He added further that the training 'helped a lot in building free-thinking students and, potentially, a fairer society' [5.2], and noted, significantly, that 'prejudice-loaded jokes are now replaced by open debate' and that 'students no longer accept homophobic comments' [5.2]. By developing her research into positive tools for social change within educational settings, Vieira has also enabled school staff to confront the iniquities stemming from recent government policy, and in particular the 'School Without Party Bill' (known popularly as the 'Gag Law') (Bill 7180/2014) passed by Brazil's Congress in 2014. The Headmaster of Contestado, one of the larger schools involved in the project noted that 'because of the Gag Law and the criminalisation of social movements [...] debates over gender diversity have been increasingly inhibited', a challenge that Vieira's research and resources have helped to address [5.1].

A key benefit of Vieira's research-led initiatives has been in enabling the schools involved to enhance the knowledge and confidence of teaching staff and to expand their capacity for addressing key issues. The Headmaster of Contestado confirmed that:

'Without this crucial partnership with the two Universities, it would have been very difficult for the schools to implement initiatives of such scope. We had wanted to introduce gender diversity in the school but had no trained staff; teachers had no or superficial and punctual knowledge of the topic' [5.1].

By sharing and co-creating the workshops, seminars and accompanying resource materials Vieira and Schwendler have actively sought to lay an important foundation upon which staff and students can continue to work together to address these issues into the future.

### **Changed curricula to include the topic around gender and sexuality**

This foundation for future development has been evident in the long-term plans for changes to the school's curricula which do not currently have a specific module on gender based on the content and approach of the research presented in the seminars. Drawing from the seminars and further training events, the schools have established an interdisciplinary working party concerned with inserting gender equality and gender diversity in the curriculum. The Headmaster of Contestado has confirmed the importance of the research in establishing this group:

'Without this project, this major discussion among learners and educators would not have started [...] it has managed to raise the level of consciousness of most people, especially those that were 'armoured' as it were' [5.1].

Vieira has also worked to build her approach into teacher training programmes [5.7] in Brazilian Higher Education. Her project's approach to gender-related capacity-building has

had a multiplying effect and has enabled the proposal and delivery of three new MA credit-bearing modules on countryside-specific gender issues in the Federal University of Paraná postgraduate courses in both Education and Sociology (2017-18). These modules have contributed to further training for a future generation of teachers and sociologists to address these issues in their work [5.8]. 12 undergraduate students in Education also participated in the workshops and seminars and obtained specific knowledge on gender issues, as well as training to run workshops in countryside schools. Five of the participating undergraduate students have pursued MAs in Education and have independently produced practice-led dissertations on countryside-specific sexual division of labour and gender diversity with fieldwork in three different settlements.

Vieira's subsequent analysis of the resources produced by students and teachers through the project demonstrated that the initiative has empowered students and teachers in the countryside to develop their confidence as intellectuals and has introduced modes of dissent to critique encroaching ultra-conservative ideologies and religious fundamentalism in Brazil's politics. Vieira's work has increased understanding of gender roles in southern, rural Brazil which has helped improve equality amongst teachers and students.

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- [5.1] [Testimonial] Headmaster (Contestado School) [Corroborator 1]
- [5.2] [Testimonial] Headmaster (Iraci Salete Strosak School) [Corroborator 2]
- [5.3] [Feedback] secondary school students on the sexual division of labour, Iraci Salete State School, Contestado School
- [5.4] [Feedback] secondary school students on gender diversity, Iracy Salete State School, Contestado School
- [5.5] [Feedback] teachers' evaluation questionnaires, November 2016
- [5.6] [Feedback] teachers' evaluation questionnaires, June 2017
- [5.7] [Testimonial] trainees in Education [Corroborator 3 & 4]
- [5.8] [Testimonial] Education and secondary school teacher