

### MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOLS IN BRAZIL

### *PRÁTICAS DE GESTÃO, LIDERANÇA EDUCATIVA E QUALIDADE DA EDUCAÇÃO EM ESCOLAS DE ENSINO MÉDIO NO BRASIL*

### *PRÁCTICAS DE GESTIÓN, LIDERAZGO EDUCATIVO Y CALIDAD DE LA EDUCACIÓN EN LAS ESCUELAS SECUNDARIAS DE BRASIL*



Ana Cristina Prado de OLIVEIRA<sup>1</sup>

e-mail: ana.oliveira@unirio.br



Rodnei PEREIRA<sup>2</sup>

e-mail: rpereira@fcc.org.br



Christy PATO<sup>3</sup>

e-mail: christypato@id.uff.br

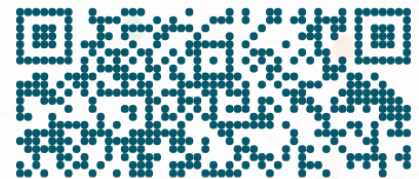


Alexsandro do Nascimento SANTOS<sup>4</sup>

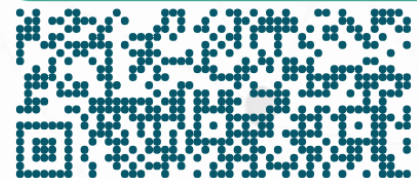
e-mail: alexsandrosantos1980@gmail.com

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**Deputy Executive Editor:** Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

<sup>1</sup> Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil. Adjunct Professor in the Department of Education Foundations and the Graduate Program in Education (PPGEdu-UNIRIO).

<sup>2</sup> University of the city of São Paulo and Carlos Chagas Foundation (FCC), São Paulo, SP, Brazil. Full Professor in the Graduate Program in Education and the Professional Master's Program in Educational Management, UNICID. Researcher at FCC.

<sup>3</sup> Fluminense Federal University (UFF), Niterói, RJ, Brazil. Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Graduate Program in Political Science (PPGCP-UFF).

<sup>4</sup> University of the city of São Paulo (UNICID), São Paulo – SP – São Paulo, SP, Brazil. Full Professor in the Graduate Program in Education and the Professional Master's Program in Educational Management.

**ABSTRACT:** This dossier presents a collective effort of data analysis from the research "Practices of Management, Educational Leadership, and Quality of Education in High Schools in Brazil" (PGLEQE), conducted by experienced researchers in the field of educational policy and management. The research aims to enhance understanding of school management and leadership practices related to academic outcomes. The study includes 139 state schools in two Brazilian states: Piauí and Espírito Santo. The methodological design involved developing and applying context-specific questions to principals, coordinators, and teachers of school units. The study is divided into four sections: the process of formulating the questions, the research field and methodology, the profile of the participants, and the articles that compose the study. The research uses the model of Day et al. (2007) to guide the study, which includes context-specific variables, independent variables, mediating variables, moderating variables, and dependent variables related to educational outcomes. After the phase of exploratory exercises with the data collected by the research, given its breadth, other researchers were invited to delve into them. This text concludes with a brief presentation of the texts they produced.

**KEYWORDS:** Educational leadership. School management. School leadership practices. School principal.

**RESUMO:** *Este dossiê apresenta um esforço coletivo de análise de dados da pesquisa "Práticas de Gestão, Liderança Educativa e Qualidade da Educação em Escolas de Ensino Médio no Brasil" (PGLEQE), realizada por pesquisadores experientes na área de política e gestão educacional. A pesquisa visa ampliar a compreensão das práticas de gestão escolar e liderança relacionadas aos resultados escolares. O estudo inclui 139 escolas estaduais em dois estados brasileiros: Piauí e Espírito Santo. O desenho metodológico envolveu o desenvolvimento e a aplicação de questões específicas do contexto a diretores, coordenadores e professores de unidades escolares. O estudo está dividido em quatro seções: o processo de elaboração das questões, o campo da pesquisa e a metodologia da pesquisa, o perfil dos participantes e os artigos que compõem o estudo. A pesquisa utiliza o modelo de Day et al. (2007) para orientar o estudo, que inclui variáveis específicas do contexto, variáveis independentes, variáveis mediadoras, variáveis moderadoras e variáveis dependentes relacionadas aos resultados escolares. Após a fase de exercícios exploratórios com os dados coletados pela pesquisa, frente sua amplitude, outros pesquisadores foram convidados a se debruçar sobre eles. Este texto finaliza com uma breve apresentação dos textos produzidos por eles.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Liderança educativa. Gestão Escolar. Práticas de liderança escolar. Diretor de escola.*

**RESUMEN:** *Este expediente presenta un esfuerzo colectivo de análisis de datos de la investigación “Prácticas de Gestión, Liderazgo Educativo y Calidad de la Educación en Escuelas de Educación Media en Brasil” (PGLEQE), llevada a cabo por investigadores experimentados en el área de política y gestión educativa. La investigación tiene como objetivo ampliar la comprensión de las prácticas de gestión escolar y liderazgo relacionadas con los resultados educativos. El estudio incluye 139 escuelas estatales en dos estados brasileños: Piauí y Espírito Santo. El diseño metodológico implicó el desarrollo y la aplicación de preguntas específicas del contexto a directores, coordinadores y profesores de unidades escolares. El estudio se divide en cuatro secciones: el proceso de elaboración de las preguntas, el campo de la investigación y la metodología de la investigación, el perfil de los participantes y los artículos que componen el estudio. La investigación utiliza el modelo de Day et al. (2007) para guiar el estudio, que incluye variables específicas del contexto, variables independientes, variables mediadoras, variables moderadoras y variables dependientes relacionadas con los resultados educativos. Después de la fase de ejercicios exploratorios con los datos recopilados por la investigación, dada su amplitud, se invitó a otros investigadores a analizarlos. Este texto concluye con una breve presentación de los textos producidos por ellos.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Liderazgo educativo. Gestión escolar. Prácticas de liderazgo escolar. Director escolar.*

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## Introduction

This dossier presents a collective effort to analyze the data generated by the research "Management Practices, Educational Leadership, and Quality of Education in Brazilian High Schools" (PGLEQE)<sup>5</sup>, conducted by experienced researchers in the field of educational policies and management working in various institutions.

The research aims to deepen the understanding of school management and leadership practices that may be related to variations in school outcomes. Building on the discussion of school effectiveness factors (Brooke; Soares, 2008) and recognizing that school management can have an indirect effect on school outcomes (Sammons, 2008), the research was designed with a quantitative methodological approach. The fieldwork included a sample of 139 state high schools in two Brazilian states, Piauí (PI) and Espírito Santo (ES). The research involved the development and administration of contextual questionnaires to principals, coordinators, and teachers in these sampled schools, followed by data analysis. In this latter part of the research, we collaborated with fellow researchers who provided new insights into the collected data, and the results of this collective work are presented in this dossier.

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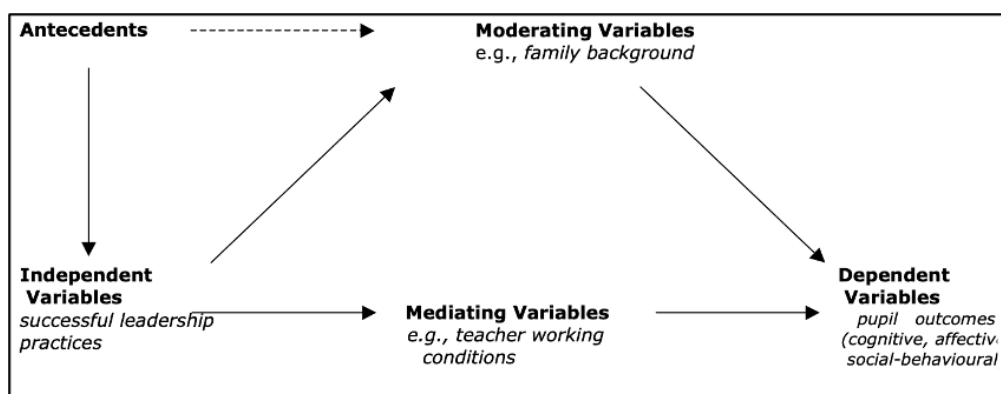
<sup>5</sup> This research was in partnership with *Instituto Unibanco*.

This opening article aims to provide details of the work that will be important for reading the following articles and is divided into four sections after this introduction. The first section discusses the process of developing the contextual questionnaires, and the second section presents the research field and the survey application methodology. The third section provides a brief description of the profile of the research participants, and the fourth section briefly introduces the articles that comprise this dossier.

### Development of Research Instruments

The questionnaires developed for this study were initially inspired by the research “*Prácticas y Creencias de Liderazgo Escolar en Chile*”, conducted by the Center for Educational Leadership Development (CEDLE) in 2019. Additionally, they were inspired by the research “Management, Leadership, and School Climate,” conducted by the Research Group on Management and Quality of Education (GESQ) at PUC-Rio in 2014 and 2016. The development of the questionnaires, following the conceptual framework that inspired us, enabled the operationalization of concepts/dimensions into measurable items. To this end, we considered the theoretical-methodological design proposed by Day *et al.* (2007) to guide research aiming to investigate the possible associations between school leadership and other variables, including school outcomes. This model, which includes contextual background variables, independent or predictor variables (including leadership practices), mediating variables, moderating or control variables, and dependent variables (related to various measures of school outcomes), is summarized below.

**Figure 1** – Framework for guiding research on the effects of school leadership



Source: Day *et al.* (2007, p. 10).

We used this reference, the same utilized by the research conducted by CEDLE, as guidance for both the proposition of the instruments and the subsequent data analysis (descriptive and inferential).

As Oliveira (2015, p. 89) reminds us, "The construction of a questionnaire is a complex process, which involves careful wording of the questions and ensuring that the research focus is maintained." Bradburn, Seymour, and Wansink (2004), important references in the survey methodology field, note that a questionnaire is an interaction process between two people who are bound by specific norms. Babbie (1999), on the other hand, points out that the construction of a questionnaire involves, first and foremost, the researcher's decision about the concepts to be measured.

Thus, taking Day *et al.* (2007), model as a reference, we listed which dimensions we intended to measure within each group of variables - Antecedents (internal context and external context); Independent (Leadership Practices); and Mediators (mostly related to school climate), which are described below:

a. Antecedents: This group covers variables that express elements of the school's external context as well as internal aspects of the unit, including the personal characteristics of the respondents. In the PGLEQE research, this dimension was measured based on the responses of principals and pedagogical coordinators to external and internal antecedent variables. According to Day *et al.* (2007, p. 11), "the context in which principals work is of enormous importance in determining what they do." The authors emphasize that research has paid little attention to these aspects, which include legal assignments of the principal/pedagogical coordinator, educational policy context and external actions directed at the school, and primary school characteristics. Regarding the internal antecedents of the school and their relation to the work of the school principal, the authors state that some research has developed typologies of personal attributes that identified ineffective leadership and highlighted variables related to cognitive, affective (motivation, personality), and sociodemographic characteristics. For the PGLEQE, items related to these themes from the contextual questionnaires applied by CEDLE and GESQ were replicated or adapted in the instruments developed for principals and pedagogical coordinators.

b. Independent (Leadership Practices): Independent variables are those that the research intends to test in association with the dependent variables. In the case of the study, as in the reference model developed by Day *et al.* (2007), we intend to investigate the association between characteristics of the school principal's work and school outcomes. An extensive



research review conducted by Leithwood and colleagues (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Leithwood; Harris; Hopkins, 2019) led to a synthesis produced and updated by the authors regarding the leadership practices most frequently and significantly associated with improvement in school outcomes. For the construction of the independent variables, we considered the dimensions of leadership practices proposed by Leithwood *et al.* (2006; Leithwood; Harris; Hopkins, 2019): *Establishing direction, Developing people, Redesigning the organization/school, Managing the school pedagogically*), as done in the research developed by CEDLE. These variables were supplemented with items adapted from questionnaires developed by GESQ and were collected through teachers' perceptions of different aspects related to school management and leadership.

c. Mediators: Considering that the effect of leadership occurs indirectly on school outcomes, it is necessary to consider what the mediating variables would be in this relationship. According to Day and colleagues

The indirect nature of a high proportion of the effects of school leadership on students has led to research on the variables or conditions in classrooms and schools that (a) are open to significant influence by those in leadership roles and (b) produce demonstrable improvements in student learning (DAY *et al.*, 2007, p. 12, our translation).

The authors enumerated several variables related to the school and classroom that have been identified by research as mediators of this process, such as: time devoted to task; quality of instruction/instructional climate; an enriching and engaging curriculum for students; safe and organized environment; team participation in decision-making throughout the school; school culture, among others. Taking this reference into account and the items related to School Climate proposed by GESQ, a set of items was developed for the constitution of the mediating variables.

It is also worth noting that the moderator variable proposed by the PGLEQE research was related to students' social characteristics: We used the Socioeconomic Level Indicator (INSE)<sup>6</sup>, calculated and provided by INEP in the latest editions of the Basic Education Assessment System (SAEB). The absolute value of this indicator per school offers good differentiation among schools based on the characteristics of the served population.

<sup>6</sup> The socioeconomic level indicator - INSE is calculated by INEP for each school participating in the *Prova Brasil/SAEB*, based on the statistical aggregation of information captured in student questionnaires (for more information, access the INEP Technical Note that presents the calculation of the indicator and the variables considered: INEP. Microdata from *Prova Brasil* 2015. Technical Note. Socioeconomic Level Indicator of Basic Education Schools. Available at: <http://portal.inep.gov.br/web/guest/indicadores-educacionais>).

As dependent variables (outcomes), our intention was to use the average proficiency level in Portuguese and Mathematics in the SAEB/*Prova Brasil* (aggregated by school) or the distribution of students with performance considered adequate from this assessment. However, the dataset provided by INEP with the results of SAEB/*Prova Brasil* for the year 2021 has a series of missing data, making it unviable for over 40% of the schools in our sample. Therefore, in studies that proposed some inferential exercise involving school outcomes, we chose to work with the data provided by the state-level large-scale assessments of the Basic Education Assessment Program of Espírito Santo (PAEBES) and the Educational Assessment System of Piauí (SAEPI).

Finally, we note that the research report included reference tables for all instruments, presenting the development of each construct into a measurable item and, subsequently, reports with the operationalization of the variables. All instruments were pre-tested and adapted when necessary.

### Survey Application Methodology and Research Field

The research sample was designed to be representative of its universe, initially including 6 state networks participating, at the initial stage of the research, in the Young Future Program <sup>7</sup>, an initiative of *Instituto Unibanco*. Due to logistical impossibility of carrying out the fieldwork - post-COVID context, state elections, among others - we narrowed our field down to samples of state schools in 2 states: Espírito Santo and Piauí, while maintaining the definition of previously selected school units. Although the two samples were not statistically representative for their states, they included schools from different regions and with different service profiles. All field research was conducted in partnership with Oppen Social, a company with experience in supporting social research.

In the state network of Espírito Santo, data collection for the research began on June 20, 2022, and extended until July 8, 2022, with visits to 70 schools in the sample. In eight schools, a second visit was necessary to complete the data collection, resulting in 78 visits by the research team. The questionnaire directed to the Directors was answered by 70 professionals, the questionnaire for the Pedagogical Coordinators (PCs) was answered by 76 professionals,

<sup>7</sup> ""Launched in 2007, *Jovem de Futuro* aims to contribute to guaranteeing learning and reducing educational inequalities among high school students as a result of management oriented towards the continuous advancement of public education" (<https://www.institutounibanco.org.br/iniciativas/jovem-de-futuro>).

and the questionnaire for the Teachers was answered by 682 teachers, all of them linked to the 70 schools that make up our sample in the state of Espírito Santo.

In the state network of Piauí, data collection for the research began on August 12 and extended until September 2, 2022, with visits to 69 schools in the sample (the field survey diary explains the exclusion of one school from the sample). In eight schools (the same number of applications in ES), a second visit was necessary to complete the data collection, resulting in 78 visits by the research team. Even with a second visit to the units, there were still managers and coordinators who could not be at the school, as they were on leave or medical leave. For these cases, the surveyors used the online filling link, which was answered by 5 professionals: 3 managers and 2 pedagogical coordinators.

For each visit, a brief report was prepared by the field team, indicating how the reception and dynamics of interaction with the school professionals went. Overall, the instrument application proceeded without major issues. At each visit, the team of field researchers introduced themselves to the units after prior scheduling and agreement with the school principal. The research instruments (questionnaires) were housed on digital platforms, and respondents were provided with portable devices (tablets), connected to the World Wide Web, so they could answer the questions directly on the electronic form.

Thus, the application methodology involved the use of a digital survey interface, with mediation (when necessary) by a surveyor. After collection, the field team aggregated the information into coded databases and delivered the material to the researchers responsible for analysis.

### **Profile of Principals, Coordinators, and Teachers in the Research Sample**

In this section, we present a brief description of the profile of the respondents of the research whose data will be analyzed in this article.



**Table 1 - Respondents of the PGLEQE Research**

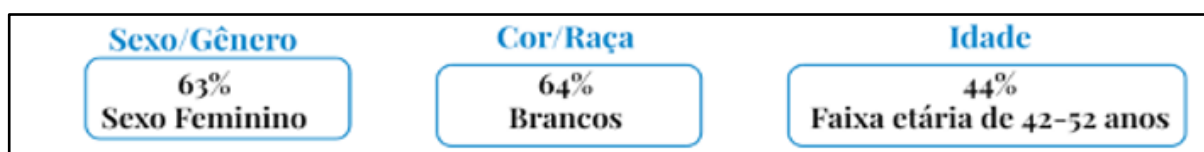
	Espírito Santo	Piauí
Teachers	682	619
Coordinators	76	76
Principals	70	70 <sup>8</sup>
Schools	70	69

Source: Compiled by the authors.

### A. Principals

The data indicate that the principals in the ES sample are mostly women, White, and aged between 42 and 52 years:

**Figure 2 - Profile of Principals in ES**



Source: Compiled by the authors.

In the case of the PI sample, the individuals in the principal positions of the schools are also mostly women, Browns, and aged between 42 and 52 years:

**Figure 3 - Profile of Principals in PI**



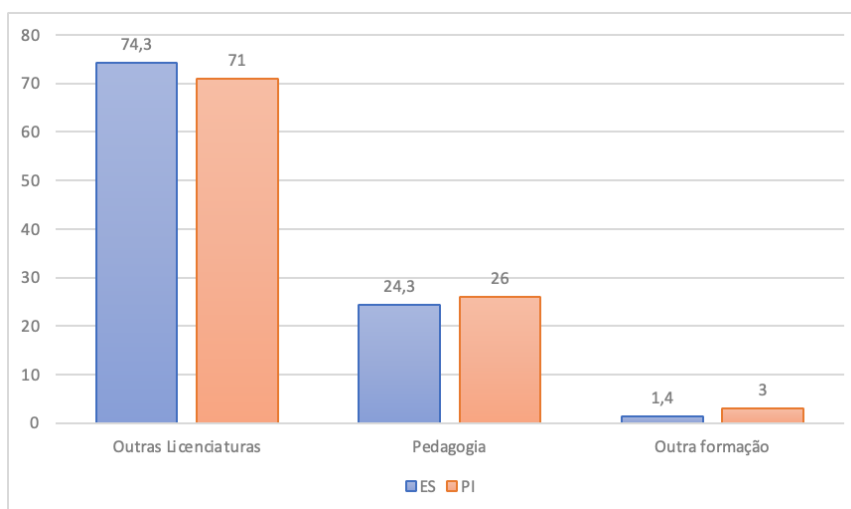
Source: Compiled by the authors.

Regarding their education, no principal in ES reported having an education lower than in higher education, and in PI, two principals reported that their highest qualification is a higher

<sup>8</sup> In the sample of schools in Piauí, an assistant director responded to the Directors' Survey, so we had two responses for the same unit. In inferential procedures, we consider the School unit.

normal course. In both samples, there is a predominance of principals who obtained education in other teaching degrees compared to Pedagogy, unlike the national average for all schools, where this proportion is almost equally distributed between the two types of education. However, this disparity may be attributed to the fact that the sample considers schools that predominantly offer education at the High School level and in the final years of Elementary Education.

**Graph 1 - Principals: Type of Completed Higher Education Course (%)**



Source: Compiled by the authors.

Considering the limited or no offering of disciplines related to School Management in teaching degrees other than Pedagogy (Oliveira; Paes de Carvalho; Brito, 2020), it is important to consider what local policies or strategies exist to complement this education.

Regarding further education, both in ES (70%) and PI (75.7%), the vast majority indicate having completed a Lato Sensu Specialization. This percentage is above the national average for principals of state schools (around 63% claim to have completed a Specialization), which seems to indicate the existence of local public policies that have encouraged this training in recent years. In the case of the ES sample, the percentage of principals who completed a master's degree (12.9%) is also significantly higher than the percentage (5.2%) of principals in the state network across Brazil with this qualification.

## B. Pedagogical Coordinators

Like the principals, the Pedagogical Coordinators (PCs) in the sample are mostly female (PI 80% and ES 88.2%) and self-declared White (57.8%) in Espírito Santo and Browns (61.2%) in Piauí. In terms of age characteristics, in both states, the professionals are middle-aged adults (between 40 and 50 years old).

**Figure 4 - Profile of PCs in ES**



Source: Compiled by the authors.

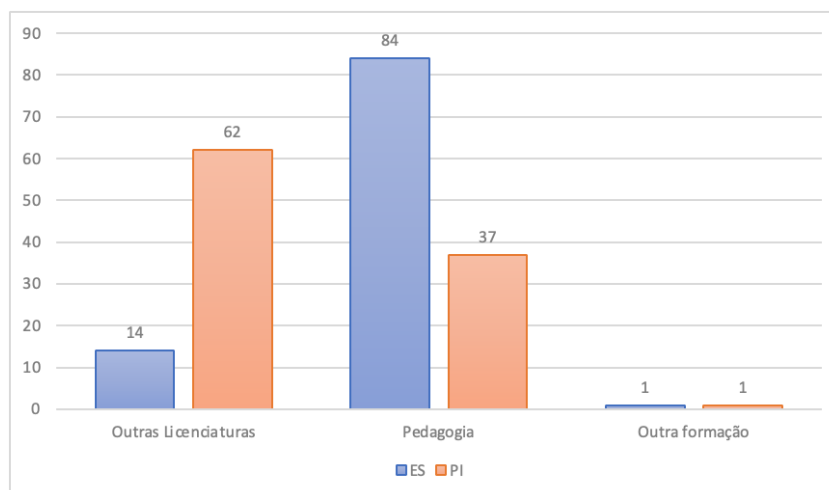
**Figure 5 - Profile of PCs in PI**



Source: Compiled by the authors.

Regarding education, coordinators in Espírito Santo mostly come from the Pedagogy program, while in Piauí, they come from various teaching degree programs.

**Graph 2 - PCs: Type of Completed Higher Education Course (%)**



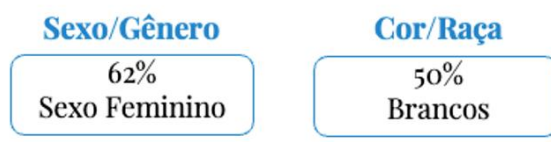
Source: Compiled by the authors.

The majority of respondents have specialization courses in the area of School Management, and the predominant way of accessing the position was through a selection process, resulting in predominantly acting on a gratified function basis, in both states.

### C. Teachers

Analyzing the sociodemographic profile of the responding teachers in the ES sample, we notice a greater diversity regarding race/ethnicity (50% white) compared to the principals. Here too, teachers who self-identified as female prevail (62%).

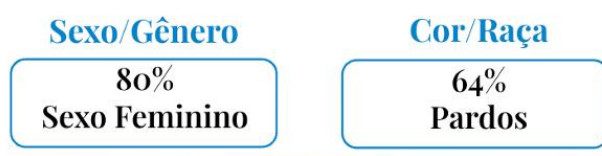
**Figure 6.** Profile of Teachers in ES



Source: Compiled by the authors.

In PI, we find that, in the sociodemographic profile of the responding teachers in the sample, female teachers also prevail (80%) and mixed-race individuals (64%).

**Figure 7 -** Profile of Teachers in PI



Source: Compiled by the authors.

Regarding initial education, none of the teachers in ES claimed to have education below higher education, and 68.5% of respondents claimed to have a specialization course. In the PI sample, two teachers marked high school, and 36 marked Higher Normal Course as their highest qualification. Furthermore, 64.7% of respondents claimed to have a specialization course.

Having presented a synthesis of the sociodemographic profile of the professionals involved in the research, we will now proceed to the presentation of the articles that compose this dossier, stemming from the analysis of the data presented here.

## Team Analysis of PGLEQE Results

After a phase of exploratory exercises with the data collected by the research, given their breadth, we invited a group of researchers to work with us, bringing new investigative perspectives to the material. The articles that compose this dossier record the results of this partnership.

The first one, "**Management and leadership practices and school results in high school: An exploratory study in two Brazilian states**", authored by us, analyzes PGLEQE data by creating indices (leadership practices and mediating variables) based on teachers' perceptions. It presents an inferential statistical study with the development of hierarchical regression models that sought to estimate the explanatory power of the dependent variables (Leadership Practices), whether intervened by mediating variables or not, in the variation of the average proficiency results of students from the schools in the sample in state assessments, with sociodemographic characteristics controlled through the schools' average INSE.

Next, in the article "**Direct and indirect associations between principal leadership, climate and academic results in high school**", Hiago César Franklin, Felipe Macedo de Andrade, and Mariane Campelo Koslinski investigate the associations between different sets of principal leadership practices, dimensions of school climate, and academic outcomes of 3rd-year high school students in the two-state education networks surveyed. Based on the results, the authors discuss the direct and indirect associations (mediated by dimensions of school climate) of leadership practices with student performance.

Also examining school leadership practices, Victoria Jager, Daniele Muniz, and Luiz Meloni, in "**The role of principals and coordinators in the school routine: A study on management practices**", analyzes the responses of these members of the school community on specific management topics. Estimating simple and partial correlations between management practices adopted by principals and pedagogical coordinators, the authors found a positive association, especially in the areas of pedagogical management and data use and monitoring.

In the following article, "**Reasons to leave: Relationships between job satisfaction, school leadership and teacher mobility**", Karina Carrasqueira studies the relationship between teachers' expression of their intention to leave the school with characteristics of school management work and school climate.



Drawing on dimensions of schoolwork such as organizational school climate and management and leadership practices, Adriano Moro, Flávia Vivaldi, and Raquel da Cunha Valle, in the text titled "**Management practices, leadership and organizational school climate: Perceptions of high school teachers**", propose the construction of evaluative indicators capable of highlighting central elements of these dimensions.

In turn, Cynthia Paes de Carvalho, Daniela Natasha Mendes Arai, and André Regis, in the article "**Pedagogical self-efficacy of school agents: interactions and influence on school performance in different regulatory contexts**", address the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers, principals, and pedagogical coordinators and their relationship with student learning outcomes.

In the following work, "**Composition of management teams and leadership practices: Evidence for a research agenda**", Fabiana da Silva Bento, Beatriz Silva Garcia, Vitor Matheus Menezes, and Fernando Gonçalves Marques discuss the composition of school teams, problematizing how such composition can translate into advantages or constraints for management practices.

The perception of principals regarding the management capacity of the education secretariats in the two states where the research was conducted is the subject of the article by Breyner Ricardo de Oliveira and Maria Michelle Fernandes Alves. In their work, titled "**What directors think about the capabilities of management of education departments? An analysis of the states of Espírito Santo and Piauí**", the authors discuss the role of secretariats and their possible relationships with the leadership of school management teams.

Subsequently, starting from the premise that school leadership is crucial for improving school work, Gonzalo Muñoz, José Weinstein, and Nicolás Álvarez, in the text "**School leadership in Brazil and Chile: An exploratory comparative perspective**", compare profiles, leadership practices, concerns, and contingencies faced by school principals in the two countries, presenting an analysis that opens a potent pathway for investigations on the subject, based on the Latin American reality.

The subsequent article, by Sofia Lerche Vieira and Eloisa Maria Vidal, titled "**The role of pedagogical coordination in the regulation of learning assessments with teachers**" addresses the role of the pedagogical coordinator and their contribution to assessment processes. It presents a relevant discussion about the ambiguity of this professional's role and the challenges they face in dealing with demands arising from both school management and teachers. This occurs in a context where external and large-scale assessments have gained prominence in the organization of pedagogical work.

In the penultimate article, Ângelo Ricardo de Souza, Renata Riva Finatti, and Ketlyn Marcieli Ferreira Sabadine, in "**School principal's leadership profile over teaching teams: Focusing on processes or results**", discuss the relationship between school principals' leadership, the qualification of the teaching team, and student performance.

Finally, this dossier concludes with the text by Nelson Antonio Simão Gimenes and Rodrigo Toledo, "**High school students' expectations of their school career: Proposition of an indicator and contributions to the exercise of school leadership**" in which the authors analyze the expectations of principals, pedagogical coordinators, and teachers regarding the academic trajectories of high school students in the states of Piauí and Espírito Santo. Based on this discussion, they propose an indicator of students' academic trajectory expectations to support management practice planning.

The collection of texts gathered here presents diverse and potent perspectives on the dataset of the Practices of Management, Leadership, and Quality of Education in High School (PGLEQE) research. We hope that each of them will stimulate broad debates and new research on the topic.

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