

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN BRAZIL AND CHILE: AN EXPLORATORY COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

LIDERANÇA ESCOLAR NO BRASIL E NO CHILE: UMA VISÃO EXPLORATÓRIA COMPARATIVA

LIDERAZGO ESCOLAR EN BRASIL Y CHILE: UNA MIRADA COMPARADA EXPLORATORIA



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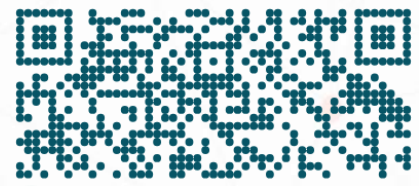
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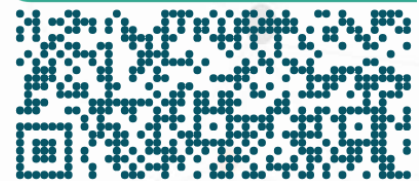
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ABSTRACT: Educational Leadership emerges as a critical factor for school improvement, playing a crucial role in formulating global educational policies, although in Latin America, these policies are incipient and diverse among countries. This exploratory and comparative study analyzes the characteristics of school leadership in Brazil and Chile based on the results of the PGLEQE study in Espírito Santo and Piauí states and a similar study conducted in Chile. The analysis compares profiles, leadership practices, concerns, and contingencies directors face in both countries. The findings reveal distinct orientations in leadership policies: Brazil emphasizes distributed and democratic Leadership, while Chile leans towards a progressive professionalization of the leadership role. This study represents a first comparative analytical effort on Leadership in these contexts, contributing to the limited comparative evidence on this topic in Latin America.

KEYWORDS: School Leadership. School Leadership Practices. School Leadership Policy. Comparative Research. Latin America.

RESUMO: *A liderança diretiva surge como um fator fundamental para a melhoria escolar, desempenhando um papel crucial na formulação de políticas educativas em escala global, embora na América Latina essas políticas ainda estejam em estágio incipiente e apresentem uma diversidade significativa entre os países. Este estudo exploratório comparativo analisa as características da liderança escolar no Brasil e no Chile, com base nos resultados do estudo PGLEQE nos estados de Espírito Santo e Piauí, e de um estudo similar realizado no Chile. A análise foca na comparação de perfis, práticas de liderança, preocupações e contingências enfrentadas por diretores e diretoras em ambos os países. Revela diferentes abordagens nas políticas de liderança: o Brasil com ênfase em uma liderança distribuída e democrática, enquanto o Chile se direciona a uma profissionalização progressiva da função diretiva. Este estudo representa um primeiro esforço analítico comparativo sobre a liderança diretiva nessas realidades, contribuindo para a escassa evidência comparada sobre este tema na América Latina.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Liderança escolar. Práticas de liderança escolar. Política de liderança escolar. Pesquisa comparativa. América Latina.*

RESUMEN: *El liderazgo directivo asoma como un factor fundamental para el mejoramiento escolar, siendo clave en la formulación de políticas educativas a nivel global, aunque en América Latina estas políticas son incipientes y diversas entre países. Este estudio comparado exploratorio analiza las características del liderazgo escolar en Brasil y Chile, basándose en los resultados del estudio PGLEQE en los estados de Espírito Santo y Piauí, y de un estudio similar realizado en Chile. El análisis se centra en comparar perfiles, prácticas de liderazgo, preocupaciones y contingencias que enfrentan los directores y directoras en ambos países. El análisis revela distintas orientaciones en las políticas sobre liderazgo: Brasil enfocado en un liderazgo distribuido y democrático, mientras que Chile orientado hacia una profesionalización progresiva de la función directiva. Este estudio constituye un primer esfuerzo analítico comparado sobre el liderazgo directivo entre estas realidades, aportando a la escasa evidencia comparada sobre este tema en América Latina.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Liderazgo Escolar. Prácticas de Liderazgo Escolar. Política de Liderazgo Escolar. Investigación Comparativa. América Latina.*

Context and Study Objectives

Educational research in recent decades has underscored the importance of educational leadership in enhancing the quality of educational processes and outcomes (Grissom; Ana, Constança, 2021; Leithwood; Harris; Hopkins, 2020). It is argued that leadership ranks second as the most influential in-school factor on student learning, second only to the direct influence of teachers in the classroom (Leithwood; Harris; Hopkins, 2020). The role of leadership is crucial in establishing fundamental working conditions, defining institutional visions, managing resources, and supporting teaching practices (Pont, 2020; OCDE, 2013).

However, effective leadership performance requires conditions that facilitate its development. Elements such as managerial training, context and capabilities, educational policies, as well as power and authority in educational governance, generate variability in the functioning and impact of leadership, especially in terms of the practices that principals can implement (Leithwood; Harris; Hopkins, 2020; Pont, 2020; Fullan, 2018). This is why various educational systems have initiated policies aimed at enhancing the transformative capacity of leadership for some time (Pont, 2020; Grissom, Mitani, Woo, 2019). These policies have delineated the roles of school leaders, provided necessary training, and attempted to professionalize the management function, aided by contributions from international organizations' recommendations (Pont, 2017; 2020; Egido, 2015) and academic research (Grissom; Anna; Constance, 2021).

Despite efforts made in different parts of the world to increase the contribution of the managerial function, evidence suggests that in Latin America, consideration of managerial leadership and its policies has been weak. A general diagnosis of the region reveals that, although there has been a growing attempt to provide favorable conditions for managerial leadership (among others, by expanding the knowledge base on the subject), a coherent policy has not yet been consolidated (Flessa, *et al.*; 2018; Muñoz; Weinstein; Quiroz, 2022; Weinstein; Hernández, 2016).

Latin American educational systems have developed various policies focused on managerial leadership, with important particularities in each country. Chile, for example, stands out for having implemented a set of reforms in this area. Between 2009 and 2019, various initiatives were carried out in the country, mainly for public sector schools, focusing on defining the responsibilities and duties of the position, improving selection processes, establishing salary incentives, and facilitating access to specific training. This approach has placed a strong

emphasis on professionalizing the managerial function, and although the results of these policies are still incipient, the Chilean experience has been highlighted as one of the most comprehensive in the region (Muñoz; Weinstein; Álvarez, 2022; Marfán *et al.*, 2021).

Education policies in this regard have had a very different emphasis in Brazil. Specialized literature suggests that, in this case, the focus has been primarily on designing and implementing policies that promote participation in decision-making within educational institutions, incorporating forms of leadership based on democratic management and shared leadership (Vieira; Prado de Oliveira, 2023). These practices have been developed in various states and municipalities, addressing aspects such as internal decision-making, access to positions, and the election of leaders by communities. However, authors like Simielli *et al.* (2023) and Vieira and Prado de Oliveira (2023) point out that these practices vary significantly among states, coexisting different forms of decision-making and access to positions. For example, approximately half of Brazilian states have systems of appointment to positions based on political nomination rather than public competition or democratic process.

This approach, legally supported by the 1988 Constitution (art. 206, VI) and the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (art. 3, VIII), is also reflected in the national education policy, as evidenced in the National Education Plan (2014) and the National Common Competency Matrix for School Directors (BNC-Diretor). Although it was approved by the National Council of Education (CNE, 2021), it has not yet been approved by the Ministry of Education. The matrix highlights, in its political-institutional dimension, competencies, and attributions linked to the exercise of democratic school management. This stamp has relegated policies for professionalizing the managerial function to a secondary level, although, to some extent, both research and public actions have been opening up a broader debate on leadership and management as key processes for improving student learning (Simielli, 2022).

In this context, this article aims to make an exploratory comparison of the characteristics of school principals' leadership in the educational environments of Brazil and Chile. This is relevant considering the differences in the approaches of leadership policies developed by each country, but above all, because there are few comparative studies on the reality of educational leadership in Latin America (Muñoz; Weinstein; Quiroz, 2022).

The analysis focuses on three key dimensions of school leadership. Firstly, the profiles of principals are examined, addressing aspects such as gender, age, academic background, professional experience, access to the position, and work teams. Secondly, a comparison is made of the different leadership practices in the two education systems, analyzing the

perception of teachers in each country regarding the leadership practices adopted by principals and headteachers of their respective centers. Finally, a comparative analysis is conducted of the main concerns and contingencies faced by school principals in the exercise of their functions, thus providing a more everyday understanding of the challenges inherent in their work.

Methodological Aspects

This article adopts a quantitative methodological approach based on the analysis of results obtained from the following research: *"Practices of management, educational leadership, and quality in education in high schools in Brazil (PGLEQE)"*, conducted in the states of Espírito Santo and Piauí, Brazil, and *"Practices and Beliefs of School Leadership in Chile"*, conducted by the Center for Educational Leadership (CEDLE) in that country, nationally, during the year 2019. Additionally, the results of the research *A Voz dos Diretores do Novo Ensino Público* (Muñoz; Weinstein; Álvarez, 2022), developed by the team at *Universidad Diego Portales*, were used.

The surveys conducted in both countries have several comparable questions. The most important ones are those related to the leadership practices implemented by the principals from the perspective of the teachers. For this purpose, the framework developed by Leithwood *et al.* (2006), distinguishes four dimensions of leaders' work: "setting direction," "developing people," "redesigning organization/school," and "managing instruction." Table 1 presents this framework and its practices.

Table 1 - Comparative Analysis of Leadership Practices

Category	Stage
Setting Direction	Building a shared vision
	Encouraging acceptance of group goals
	Demonstrate high expectations
Developing People	Individual attention and support for teachers
	Care and intellectual support
	Modeling
Redesigning Organization	Building a collaborative culture
	Structuring an organization that facilitates work
	Creating a productive relationship with family and community
	Connecting the school to its environment and opportunities
Managerial Pedagogy	Personnel
	Providing technical support to teachers
	Monitoring teaching and learning practices

Avoid distracting the team from what is not the focus of their work

Source: Based on Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) and Leithwood *et al.* (2006).

In addition to the leadership practices (each composed of a set of more specific items that address the leaders' work), the surveys applied in both countries considered various other issues related to the work of the principals in the two countries. Along with this, both studies aimed to create a profile of the principals, so that it is also possible to make some comparisons about their characteristics.

The sample used for analysis varies according to each component. For the analysis of the profile of the principals, as well as their concerns and contingencies, the total number of principals surveyed was considered, reaching 140 principals in Brazil (Espírito Santo and Piauí) and 381 in Chile. To analyze the practices, the opinions of all surveyed teachers in each country were considered, totaling 1,301 teachers in Brazil and 1,901 in Chile.

It is essential to consider the methodological limitations of this comparative exploratory analysis, mainly related to three key elements: the representativeness of the surveys, the timing of the application of the instruments, and the categories of analysis used to assess management practices. First, regarding the representativeness of the data, it is necessary to emphasize that in Chile, the information is representative at the national level for primary schools, while in Brazil, the data collection is restricted to two states of the country (Espírito Santo and Piauí) and to high school, according to the definitions established by the PGLQE team⁴. These two states were considered as a unit to facilitate this first exploratory exercise of comparison between countries and to avoid comparisons between the characteristics of the studied Brazilian states.

Secondly, it is crucial to highlight that the instruments were applied at different times: the CEDLE survey was conducted in 2019, while the PGLQE was carried out in 2023. This aspect is relevant because the opinions and evaluations of different actors are influenced by the current situation of the educational systems, the contingencies and concerns of the schools, educational policies, and external conditions, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. To improve the comparability of the cases, a review of the results of the survey “*A Voz dos Diretores do Novo Ensino Público*” (Muñoz; Weinstein; Álvarez, 2022), was included, complementing the analysis of the main concerns and contingencies faced by school principals in Chile in a post-pandemic context.

⁴ For more information about the investigation, see Oliveira *et al.* (2024) in the opening article of this dossier “*Dossiê: Práticas de Gestão, Liderança Educativa e Qualidade da Educação em Escolas de Ensino Médio no Brasil*” published in this edition.

Thirdly, a plan was developed to conduct the analysis of management practices based on the harmonization of variables established for both instruments. This is because the CEDLE 2019 survey inspires the PGLQE survey. However, in the case of Brazil, the practices were assessed through 4 categories, with "Strongly Agree" or "Often" being the ones with the highest scores, both with a value of 4. On the other hand, in Chile, the maximum value corresponds to "Strongly Agree" with a value of 5. It is essential to note that this difference in the number of categories may influence the proportion of teachers who attribute the highest score to each practice.

To contrast the analysis of managerial practices between the two countries, an inferential exercise was conducted using the chi-square statistical test to determine the significance of differences in the proportions of "Partially Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses. The results indicated that all differences between the countries are statistically significant. Consequently, the analysis was focused on evaluating the practices and their distribution within each system, leaving the comparison between countries in the background in this specific case.

Despite these limitations, this article represents a first step in the analysis of these surveys from a comparative perspective, providing an understanding of the main aspects of school leadership in the states of Espírito Santo and Piauí in Brazil and the overall situation in Chile. Additionally, it lays the groundwork for future studies and research.

Results

Profile of Principals

Our first analysis focuses on characterizing the profile of principals. This characterization includes aspects such as gender, age, education, professional experience, access to the position, and information about management teams. These details are summarized in the following Table 2.

Table 2 - Profile Characteristics of Directors

	Brazil (Espírito Santo and Piauí)	Chile
Gender	64% of interviewed directors are women and 35% are men.	53.3% were women and 46.7% were men
Age	The average age of directors is 46.8 years, with a minimum age of 29 and a maximum of 69.	The average age of directors is 54 years, with a minimum age of 28 and a maximum of 85.
Academic Background	Directors' academic background is primarily focused on bachelor's degrees in various specializations (73%), with 25% specialized in pedagogy. Additionally, 72.9% have specialization (postgraduate diploma - over 360 hours), while 7.9% have master's and/or doctoral degrees. 13% have completed managerial training courses, and at the time of the study, 56.4% were participating in administration courses.	96.6% of directors have higher education degrees in education, with 46.3% in basic pedagogy and 36% in high school education. Additionally, 79% have some form of diploma or postgraduate degree, of which 66% have master's degrees, 4.5% have doctoral degrees, and 52% have completed other specialization courses in educational management.
Professional Experience	On average, respondents have 7.4 years of Experience as directors and have been leading their current establishments for an average of 5.7 years. Additionally, 98% indicate they have been teachers, with an average of 31 years of teaching experience. Of these, 31% were teachers at the same school and 28% at another establishment before assuming directorship.	On average, directors have 9.4 years of Experience in the educational system. In their current establishments, the average Experience is 7.3 years. Before assuming directorship, they held positions as teachers (23.6%), pedagogical coordinators (22.2%), and directors of other establishments (20.7%). 60% of directors previously worked at the same establishment, and 42% of pedagogical coordinators also worked at the same location.
Access to Position	Seventy-five percent of directors were appointed through a simplified selection process ⁵ , while 16.4% were appointed through technical or political guidance by a Ministry of Education or other agency. Only 0.7% of directors were appointed through public competition.	45.4% of directors were appointed by direct invitation or non-competitive appointment. A total of 27% participated in a Superior Public Management competition (which applies only to centers of dependency managed by the State), and 17.3% were admitted through a competition organized by the holder or administrator of the establishment.

⁵ According to PGLQE (2023), the “simplified selection process” refers to the process of hiring directors from a limited group of competitors who are invited to present a management project, an interview, a community consultation process, or technical or political indication.

Management Team	85% of directors have a management team, while 15% do not. The management team usually includes a pedagogical coordinator in 89% of schools, followed by an educational counselor in 18%, an inspector in 10%, and a vice principal in 6%.	99.5% of directors have a management team, and within this group, 96.6% have a Head of UTP or Pedagogical Coordinator. Additionally, 75.5% have Coexistence Managers, and 67.8% have inspectors on their teams.
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Source: Authors' elaboration based on research (2023).

These pieces of information illustrate relevant differences in the profiles of principals in the states of Espírito Santo and Piauí, Brazil, and in Chile. Among the main differences are:

- In Chile, the average age of principals is higher than in Brazil.
- Brazil has a higher proportion of female principals than Chile.
- Chile has a more specialized academic background than Brazil, with higher proportions in continuing education courses and postgraduate studies. However, Brazil stands out for the high proportion of principals currently enrolled in administration programs.
- Principals in Chile have a higher average experience in the education system and in their establishments compared to Brazil. Additionally, there is a common trajectory from teaching to executive management.
- Chile has implemented a policy of professionalization in the hiring of public management positions, in contrast to Brazil, where selection is mainly done through direct appointment processes or competitions convened by administrators.
- Management teams are predominant in both systems, although they are more prominent in number and function in the Chilean case.

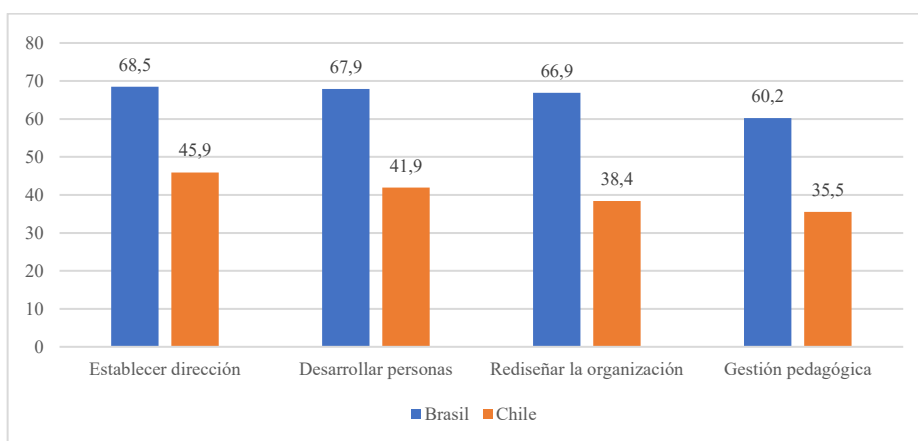
Leadership Practices of School Principals in Brazil (Espírito Santo and Piauí) and Chile

Based on the questionnaires administered to teachers, it is possible to obtain an overview of the assessment these teachers make of the leadership practices developed by principals in their schools. The results of this analysis allow for observing this assessment at a general level, both in terms of the four dimensions of leadership described in the methodological section and at a more specific level regarding the different indicators that account for these practices. It is noteworthy that the case of Brazil corresponds only to the two federative states analyzed: Espírito Santo and Piauí.

Overview of Dimensions of Leadership Practices

Firstly, the data show significant differences at the overall level in the four dimensions of managerial leadership (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006), namely: establishing direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and pedagogical management. This can be seen in the figure below:

Figure 1 – Distribution of practices according to dimensions of school leadership (% strongly agree/agree)



Caption: Establishing direction; developing people; redesigning the organization; Pedagogical management.

Source: Authors' elaboration (2023).

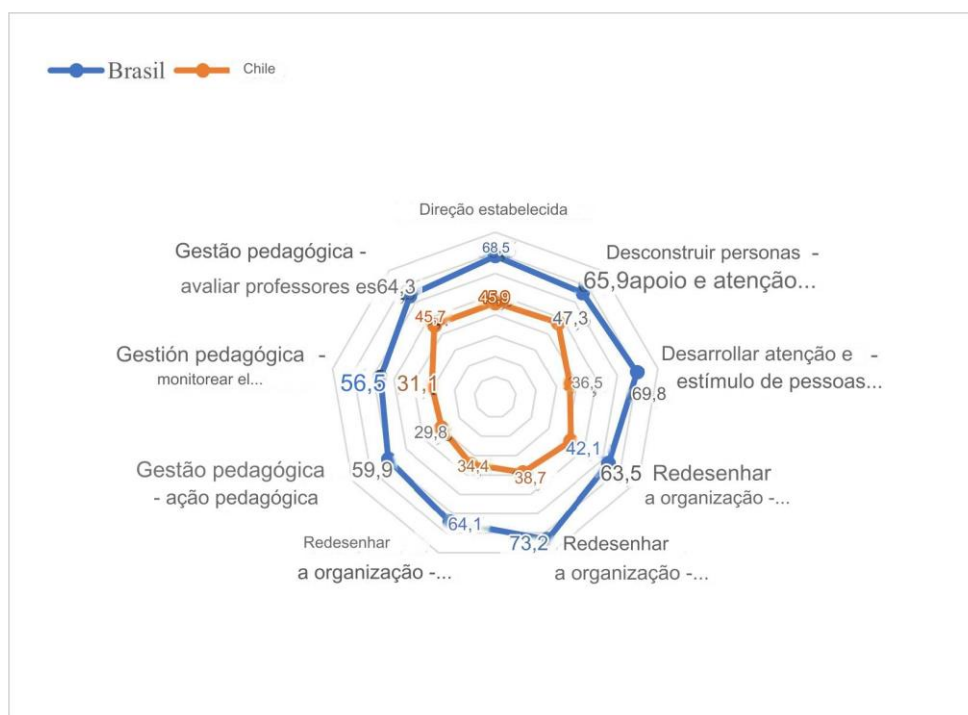
Based on this information, it is possible to highlight that the research conducted in Brazil reveals more favorable perceptions regarding various dimensions of school leadership compared to Chile, which translates into a higher proportion of responses located in the "Agree partially" or "Strongly agree" category. However, it is essential to emphasize that, due to variations in the instruments used (including the number of categories), differences in the samples from each country, and the implementation of the instruments at different times, these marked differences between the two realities should be analyzed with caution.

Despite these considerations, it is noted, for now, that in Brazil, the leadership dimension most highly rated by teachers is "Establishing Direction" and "Developing People" (68.5% and 67.9% strongly agree that this practice is developed, respectively). In the Chilean context, the results reflect the same trend, where the leadership dimension most positively rated by teachers is "Establishing Direction" (45.9% strongly agree), followed by "Developing People" (41.9% strongly agree). It is important to highlight that the set of management practices

most criticized by teachers in both countries is related to the pedagogical management of principals, reaching 60.2% in Brazil and 35.5% in Chile. This is consistent with the evidence available in these countries, highlighting that the most significant challenge for principals is developing effective pedagogical or instructional leadership.

Secondly, and thanks to the development of various “Leadership Practice Indices” elaborated by the PGLEQE team, it is possible to obtain information on teachers’ assessment of some sub-dimensions or more specific practices of leadership, namely: i) Establishing direction (which is maintained as a single practice), ii) Developing people (support and attention to teachers, and attention and intellectual stimulation), iii) Redesigning the organization (relationship with family and community; structuring an organization that facilitates work; and connecting the school with its environment). Finally, iv) Pedagogical Management (pedagogical action; monitoring of learning and evaluation of teachers). Graph 2 shows how each of these sub-dimensions behaves in each of the countries.

Graph 2 - PGLEQE Leadership Practice Indices in Brazil and Chile (2023)



Source: Authors' elaboration (2023).

The data shows that, in the case of Brazil, the index most highly rated by teachers is related to the redesign of the organization, specifically in "creating a structure that facilitates the work of teachers and professionals in the institution" (73.2% strongly agree). The following

are practices related to developing people: "attention and intellectual stimulation" (69.8%) and "establishing direction" (68.5%). In Chile, the highest-rated leadership practices are linked to developing people ("support and attention to teachers") (47.3%), "establishing direction" (45.6%), and pedagogical management focused on "teacher assessment" (45.7%). As observed, both countries have low ratings for practices associated with pedagogical management, especially in the indices of "pedagogical action" and "monitoring of learning".

A specific look at leadership practices in both systems

The information provided by the analysis of the two surveys also enables teachers to examine the assessment made for each of the sub-dimensions or indices of leadership practices. Given the quantity and complexity of available information⁶, we have selected the aspects that seem most relevant for this comparison:

- In the sub-dimension/dimension "establishing direction," it is observed that the best practices assessed by teachers in Brazil relate to "incorporating the interests, ideas, and educational policies of teachers into the school's pedagogical project." Conversely, Chile shows a better assessment of practices centered on the figure of the principal and their "ability to set objectives and communicate them clearly and consistently with educational policies." In both countries, the least well-assessed practices are related to direct work with teachers in defining goals and proposing joint work strategies.
- Specifically in the area of "Support and attention to teachers," within the dimension of people in development, in Brazil, the best-assessed practice relates to the "principal being available and caring for the school community" (73.1%), followed by "creating an environment of care and trust." In Chile, there is the same positive assessment regarding the fact that the principal listens to and cares for the teachers (64.5%).
- In the same dimension of People in Development, in the index of Attention and Intellectual Support, in both systems, the best-assessed practice relates to principals encouraging teachers to do and be better (79.9% in Brazil and 51.3% in Chile). In Brazil, the least well-assessed practice is that the principal "helps teachers learn from their

⁶ To access complete information on leadership practice indexes, it is recommended to consult the attachment at the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ms2B7RQBJvOF7tMMH8mUJqeBD719QA6/view?usp=sharing>.

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mistakes" (58%), while in Chile, the lowest is proposing strategies for teachers' work in the face of specific needs (16.5%).

- When it comes to the organization of teaching work (in the dimension of redesigning the organization), in both systems, the practices that receive the best assessment focus on clearly defining and strengthening the roles and responsibilities of the institution's professionals, as well as implementing strategies to keep units organized and facilitate teachers' work. These two practices are highly appreciated in Brazil and Chile (81.4% and 84.5%, respectively). Also, in both systems, the practice least assessed by teachers is related to coordinating work among teachers from different areas and levels of education. This practice receives a strong agreement level of 60.6% in Brazil and 28.7% in Chile.
- At the level of "Relationship with Families and the Community" (in the dimension of "redesigning the organization"), in both systems, the best-assessed practice is that the "principal seeks to inform the community about the establishment's results." This reaches 72.6% in Brazil and 55.6% in Chile. On the other hand, the worst-assessed practice is related to the implementation of concrete actions to involve parents and guardians in the educational process (50.4% in Brazil and 28.6% in Chile).
- Finally, in the field of pedagogical management and one of its sub-dimensions ("pedagogical management"), in Brazil, the best-assessed practice is that the principal "ensures that each teacher works diligently to achieve specific objectives" (68%), and the worst is the "use of classroom observation data for continuing education" (46%). On the other hand, in Chile, the best-assessed practice refers to promoting the use of ICTs to improve learning processes (42%), while the lowest refers to avoiding external initiatives from the establishment distracting teachers' time (19%). In this same dimension, it is evident that the observation and feedback work in the classroom is a comparatively weak practice in both systems, with importance and uses given to learning assessments as a resource to improve pedagogical work.

Key Concerns and Contingencies Faced by Principals

The third section of this comparison concerns managerial management and the use of principals' time based on how often they face certain problems and urgencies. To this end, the main concerns and contingencies that managers must face in their work within the establishments were analyzed.

Key Concerns of Principals

The graph below illustrates the main concerns of principals in Brazil based on the results of the PGLEQE 2023 survey. This is derived from the question, "Now, in addition to the challenges arising from the pandemic and considering the characteristics of the students and your school, what are the top three concerns you have regarding the school?"

Graph 3 – Key Concerns of Principals in Brazil (PGLEQE 2023)



Source: Authors' creation (2023).

The data shows that the main concerns of principals in Brazil, in the states of Espírito Santo and Piauí, are primarily related to issues such as the increase in the number of students

with emotional problems, being the most significant concern for 16.7% of principals. Similarly, dropout rates (13.1%) and student disinterest and demotivation (11.2%) are significant concerns. Academic results and absenteeism (related, in fact, to dropout rates) are also major concerns for school leaders in these two states.

In turn, the CEDLE 2019 survey reveals the main concerns of principals in Chile in that year of application. These insights can be seen in the graph below.

Graph 4 – Main Concerns of Principals in Chile (2019)

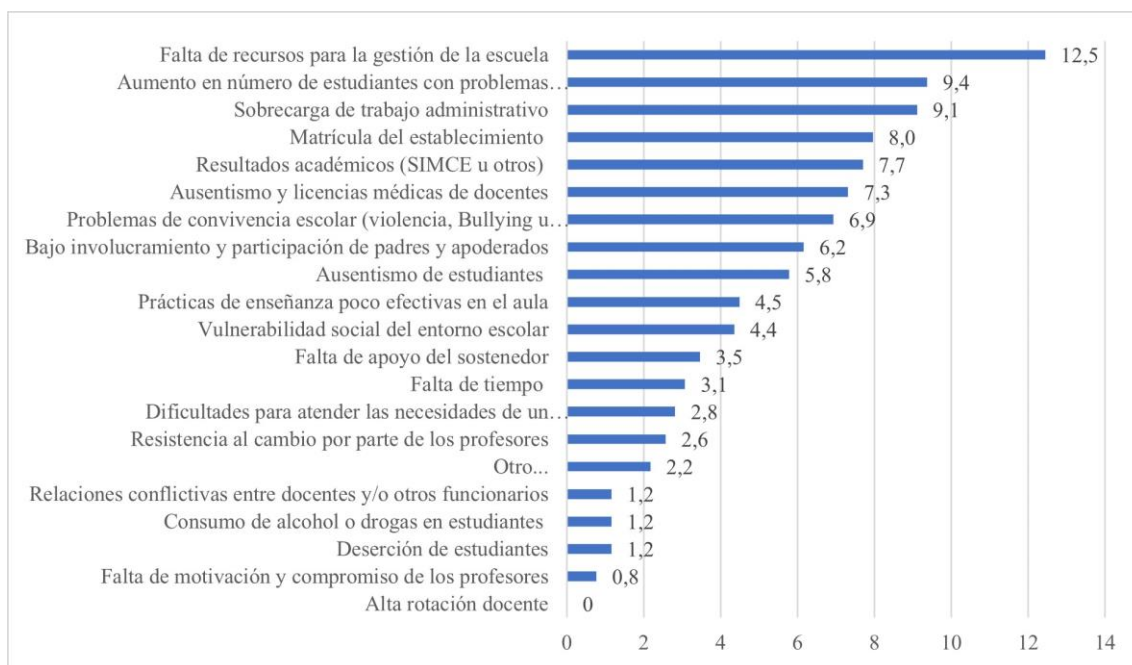


Source: Authors' creation (2023).

In the Chilean context, the data reveals that principals' main concern is to improve students' academic results, which is linked to the standardized SIMCE test at 20.5%. This is followed by concerns about low parental involvement in students' education (10.5%) and school coexistence problems, such as bullying and school violence (10.1%). It is worth noting that the concern about academic results is considerably greater than other concerns, almost doubling the attention given, for example, to school coexistence issues. It is also interesting to note that a fourth priority concern in Chile is "ineffective teaching practices," an issue that concerns only a smaller percentage (3%) of principals in the two states studied in Brazil.

It is important to note that the concerns reflected in these results are evidently influenced by the temporal context of the study, conducted before the crisis caused by COVID-19. From our perspective, this explains why, in Brazil, principals show greater concern for emotional aspects, absenteeism, dropout rates, student interest, and motivation, themes that were documentedly affected by the pandemic. Indeed, these findings coincide with a study conducted in Chile in 2022 (Montecinos et al., 2022), which collected information about the effects of the crisis from the perspective of public education principals in that country. The graph below shows how, already in this year, the concerns of the principals are significantly different.

Graph 5 – Key concerns of school principals in Chile (2022)



Source: Muñoz, Weinstein, and Álvarez (2022).

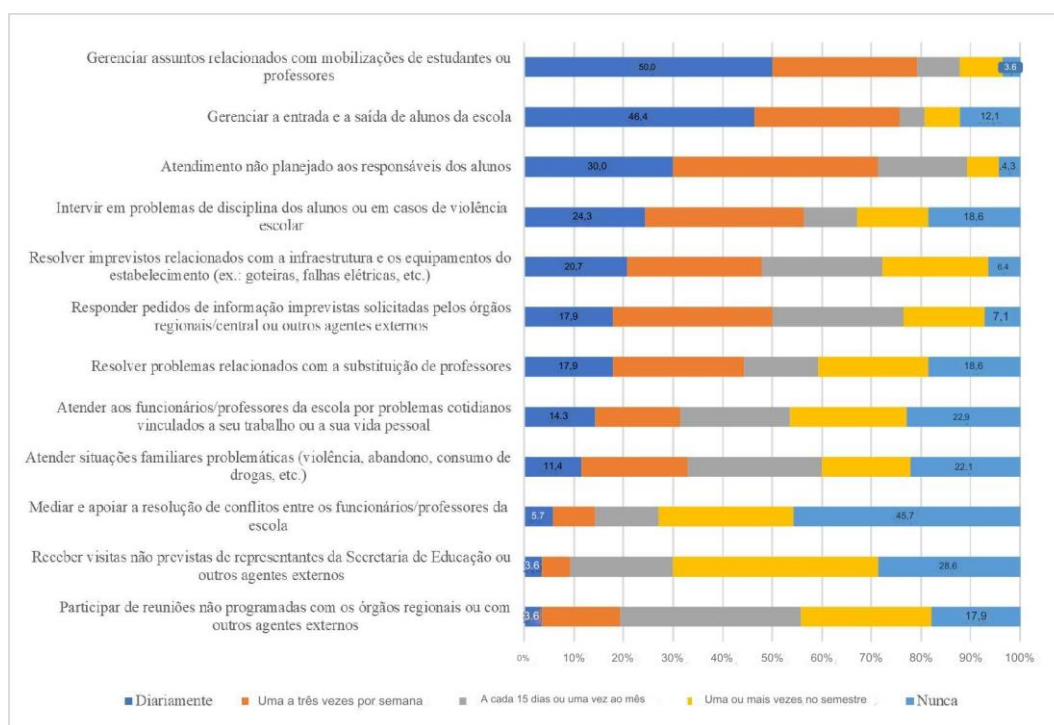
These recent data indicate that the concerns of principals in Chile for the year 2022, in a context similar to that observed by the PGLEQE survey in Brazil (2023), are inclined to converge towards issues such as the increase in students with emotional problems, challenges of coexistence or teacher absenteeism, which are in parallel with the scarcity of resources for school management, school enrollment, and administrative workload.

Key Contingencies Faced by Principals in Brazil and Chile

Another central aspect of our analysis concerns the activities and time management of school principals. For this, we used the frequency with which leaders face a set of contingencies or unexpected situations as an indicator. These contingencies have been investigated in Brazil and Chile, using the same measurement scales, allowing for a direct comparison.

The graph below illustrates the contingencies faced by principals in Brazil, based on the question “Durante o último ano, com a frequência aproximada desta escola”. This question was categorized on a scale ranging from "daily," "one to three times a week," "every 15 days to once a month," "once or more times per semester," to "never."

Graph 6 – Key contingencies of school principals in Brazil



Source: Elaboration by the authors (2023).

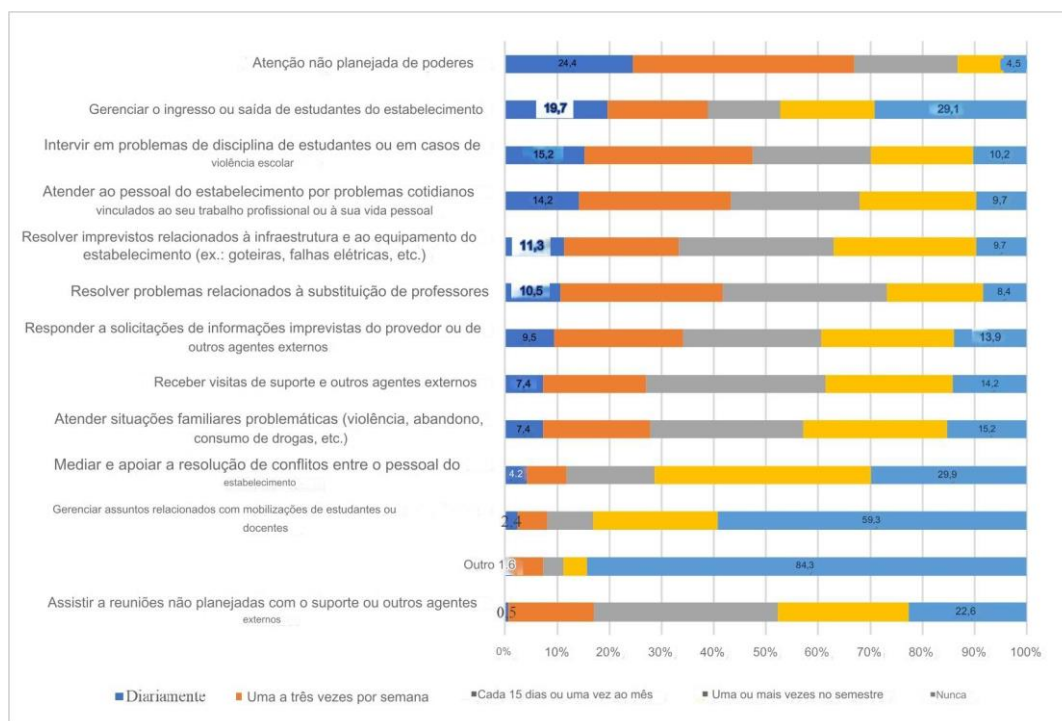
In the Brazilian context, the PGLQE 2023 survey reveals that the contingencies directors most frequently face are related to "managing situations related to the mobilization of students and teachers," a matter that can be interpreted as situations where the director must motivate and channel these actors. This contingency occurs daily for 50% of the principals⁷.

⁷ The concept of “mobilizations” has different connotations in these countries, and as it was used in the same way in both studies, it is good to clarify this. In Brazil, this concept is mainly associated with the motivation of students and teachers, while in Chile, it refers to the participation of students in some type of mobilization, mostly protest.

This is followed by "managing the entry and exit of students from the school" (46.4% daily) and "unplanned attention from parents or individuals assuming responsibility for the students" (30%). On the other hand, among the less common contingencies are mediating and supporting conflict resolution among establishment staff (45.7%) and receiving unplanned visits from the Ministry of Education or other external agents (28.6%).

The results of the survey conducted in Chile in 2019 show the main contingencies faced by school principals in Chile, highlighting those that occur most and least frequently, as illustrated in the following figure or graph.

Graph 7 – Key contingencies of school principals in Chile (2019)

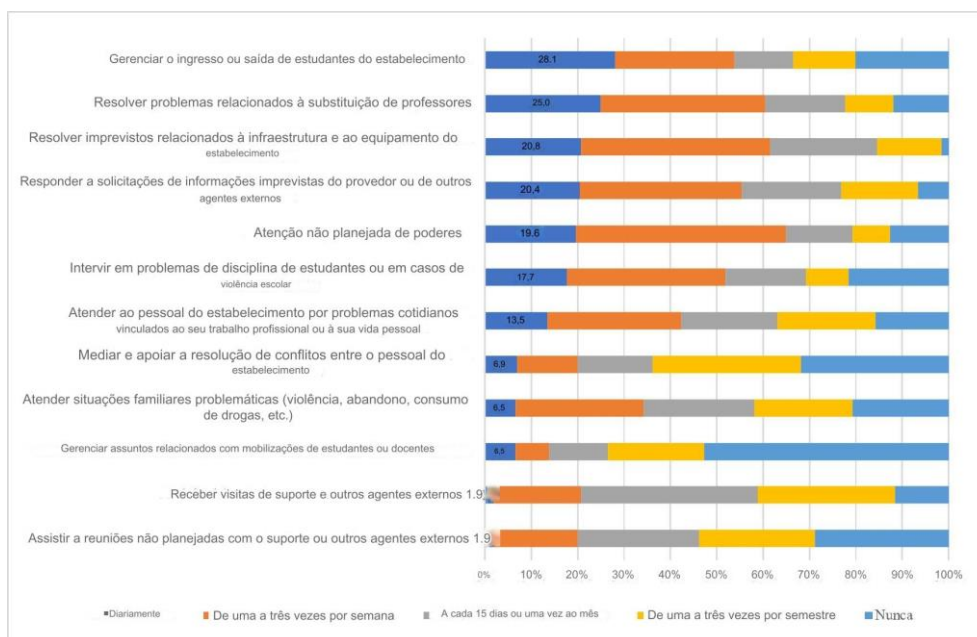


Source: Elaboration by the authors (2023).

In the case of Chile, the data shows that the most frequent contingencies faced by school principals are related to unplanned attention from parents (24.4%), one of the most critical contingencies in Brazil. This is followed by managing the entry or exit of students from the school (19.7%) and intervening in disciplinary problems or cases of school violence (15.2%), contingencies that are also very common in the Brazilian case. In contrast, it is observed that the less common contingencies include situations of mobilization of students and teachers (59.3%), which contrasts with the Brazilian reality, and mediating internal conflicts within the school staff (30%).

Regarding concerns, the survey "The Voice of Directors of Public Education" (Muñoz; Weinstein; Álvarez, 2022) also reveals a shift in the contingencies experienced by directors in Chile after the pandemic, as can be seen in the graph below.

Graph 8 – Key contingencies of school principals in Chile (2022)



Source: Elaboration by the authors (2023).

In this context, it is observed that among the most frequent contingencies during the year 2022 in Chile, the frequent situation of "resolving teacher substitution problems" and "resolving unforeseen issues related to infrastructure and equipment in educational institutions" now emerges. The latter point is similar to the case in Brazil, which has also been facing this contingency extensively. However, in 2022, the most frequent contingencies are the unplanned attendance of parents and the management of student entries and exits, which are also among the most important in Brazil; this shows that the contingency of managerial function has a quite common basis between the two countries.

Final considerations

In conclusion, this study provides an interesting comparative panorama of educational leadership and some of its basic characteristics in Brazil, represented by the states of Espírito Santo and Piauí, and Chile; using surveys and items from recent studies conducted in both countries as sources.

The analysis allowed the identification of a significant difference in the profile of the directors in these educational networks. In terms of profiles, there are substantial differences. Chilean directors, on average, are older than their Brazilian counterparts, and a higher proportion of female directors stand out in Brazil. Regarding education, in Brazil, the majority of directors have specialized training, with a low proportion of postgraduate education, while in Chile, the majority have education backgrounds, and many continue their education with postgraduate degrees, especially master's degrees and specializations. In terms of experience, directors in Brazil have fewer average years of experience than their Chilean counterparts, and the majority in Brazil had their primary previous experience as teachers, unlike Chile, where there is a more marked trajectory from teaching to management, passing through managerial roles along the way.

In both educational systems, principals have management teams accompanying them, although these teams are broader and more diverse in the case of Chile. Furthermore, Chile has a significantly higher proportion of principals selected through more rigorous selection processes compared to the states studied in Brazil, where appointments or simplified direct competitions prevail.

We believe these differences explain a greater professionalization of the managerial function in Chile (Marfán *et al.*, 2021). Brazil, on the other hand, is moving towards an intermediate path to this professionalization, which, to some extent, could be explained by the weight of the idea of a managerial function focused on the democratic management of the centers (Simielli *et al.* 2023; Vieira; Prado de Oliveira, 2023).

According to the evidence from our study, this greater professionalization of the managerial function in Chile does not, however, translate into a better evaluation of leadership practices in that country. Overall, the teachers who participated in the study have a somewhat more critical view of the development of leadership actions considered in this study. This may be explained by a greater objective presence of leadership practices in Brazil, although it is

more likely that the distance between the two countries, in favor of Brazil, is related to some cultural aspects affecting the subjective view teachers have of their principals in both countries.

Two plausible hypotheses are feasible: one is that, as a result of greater professionalization and policies focused on principals in Chile, the level of demand applied by teachers is also higher; another is that Brazil, due to the application of a more participatory and democratic approach to leadership, where principals and teachers tend to recognize each other as peers (Vieira; Prado de Oliveira, 2023), also tends to make a more favorable assessment of principals' leadership practices, especially those "colleagues" who were consulted in the study.

A more specific look at the best and worst leadership practices evaluated in each country revealed relevant differences between the two systems, as well as essential similarities. One such similarity is that pedagogical leadership practices and those focused on teacher professional development tend to be more poorly evaluated than others in both countries, consolidating the idea that managerial management centered on teaching and learning processes is a common challenge that is still pending in our countries. Practices related to what is traditionally known as "transformational leadership," namely, establishing a vision for the school, translating it into goals that are communicated, and aligning the community in that direction, is an area where both countries have practices that teachers better evaluate.

There are many differences in the implementation of practices between the two countries, and further studies will need to be conducted to better understand their occurrence. One of the most exciting differences - in the field of the relationship between the school and its surroundings - is that in Brazil, practices related to interaction with the community and families receive much more positive evaluations, highlighting communication of institutional achievements and community participation in educational decisions (Vieira; Prado de Oliveira, 2023). In Chile, the highest approval is focused on director accountability, a matter that reflects the influence of educational policies in that country, characterized by strong accountability, autonomy, and responsibility of directors (Marfán *et al.*, 2021).

The study also delved into the most critical concerns and contingencies that directors have to face. In Brazil, concerns focus on the increase in students with emotional problems, dropout rates, and student disengagement. On the other hand, in Chile, improving academic results, low parental involvement, and social interaction problems such as bullying and violence are the main concerns; compared with the recent post-pandemic evidence in Chile, the concerns among directors of the two countries are pretty close. Regarding the contingencies they face most frequently, directors in Brazil mainly face the challenge of mobilizing and motivating

students and teachers, followed by managing student entry and exit and unplanned parental attention. In Chile, the main daily contingencies are quite convergent, which also aligns with the common challenges faced by school management in both education systems.

Despite the methodological limitations and safeguards that must be considered in these comparisons, this article represents a first step in the comparative analysis of the main aspects of school leadership in two distinct contexts, such as the states of Espírito Santo and Piauí in Brazil and Chile. This mainly considers the differences in approaches to educational policies aimed at the development of managerial leadership developed in recent decades. Furthermore, it lays the groundwork for future studies and research, which should continue to delve into the particular and common challenges of educational leadership, a key variable for academic improvement in Latin America.

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