ARTICLES

SETTINGS OF MANAGEMENT OF MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS IN BRAZIL: THE CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONNAIRE OF PROVA BRASIL

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the results of a study that characterized management settings in municipal schools in Brazil, based on principals' responses to the contextual questionnaire of Prova Brasil 2015. The purpose of this study was to analyze the potential of the practices reported in the instrument to contribute to the democratization of education. After the identification of limits in the constructs of the items, this instrument brought information on: profile data, education and professional trajectories; participation of families and other community members in the management of schools; initiatives that affect the access and permanence of students in school with guaranteed learning. We used the IBM SPSS Statistics-20 software, a program designed to perform statistical analysis.

MANAGEMENT • MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS • PROVA BRASIL

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CENÁRIOS DE GESTÃO DE ESCOLAS MUNICIPAIS NO BRASIL: QUESTIONÁRIO CONTEXTUAL DA PROVA BRASIL

RESUMO

Este artigo discute resultados de estudo que caracterizou cenários de gestão vigentes em escolas municipais no Brasil, com base em respostas dos diretores ao questionário contextual da Prova Brasil de 2015. Teve como propósito analisar a potencialidade de práticas declaradas no instrumento para contribuir com a democratização da educação. Identificados limites nos constructos dos itens, o referido instrumento trouxe subsídios para exame de: dados de perfil, trajetórias de formação e profissional; participação de famílias e demais membros da comunidade na gestão das escolas; iniciativas que incidem no acesso e permanência dos alunos na escola com garantia da aprendizagem. Utilizou-se o software IBM SPSS Statistics-20, programa desenvolvido para realizar análises estatísticas.

GESTÃO • ESCOLAS MUNICIPAIS • PROVA BRASIL

SCÉNARIOS DE GESTION DES ÉCOLES COMMUNALES AU BRÉSIL: QUESTIONNAIRE CONTEXTUEL DE L'EXAMEN PROVA BRASIL

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude dont le but était de caractériser les scénarios de gestion en place dans des écoles municipales au Brésil. Elle part des réponses fournies par les directeurs au questionnaire contextuel de la Prova Brasil de 2015. Son but était d'analyser la potentialitédes pratiques déclarées dans l'instrument mentionné ci-dessusafin de contribuer à la démocratisation de l'éducation. Cet instrument a permis non seulement d'identifier les limites présentes dans l'élaboration de ses items, mais aussi deprocurer des informationspour examiner: les données des profils, les trajectoires de formation et professionnelles; la participation des familles et d'autres membres de la communauté dans la gestion des écoles ; les initiatives jouant un rôle dans l'accès et le maintien des élèves à l'écoletout en garantissantl'apprentissage. Le logiciel IBM SPSS Statistics-20, programme développé pour l'analyse statistique, a été utilisé pour ce travail.

GESTION • ÉCOLES COMMUNALES • PROVA BRASIL

ESCENARIOS DE GESTIÓN DE ESCUELAS MUNICIPALES EN BRASIL: CUESTIONARIO CONTEXTUAL DE LA PROVA BRASIL

RESUMEN

Este artículo discute resultados de un estudio que caracterizó escenarios de gestión vigentes en escuelas municipales en Brasil, en base a respuestas de los directores al cuestionario contextual de la Prova Brasil de 2015. Tuvo el propósito de analizar la potencialidad de prácticas declaradas en el instrumento para contribuir con la democratización de la educación. Luego de identificar límites en los constructos de los ítems, el referido instrumento aportó subsidios para el examen de datos de perfil, trayectorias de formación y profesional; participación de familias y demás miembros de la comunidad en la gestión de las escuelas; iniciativas que inciden en el acceso y permanencia de los alumnos en la escuela con garantía del aprendizaje. Se utilizó el software IBM SPSS Statistics-20, programa desarrollado para realizar análisis estadísticos.

GESTIÓN • ESCUELAS MUNICIPALES • PROVA BRASIL

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T HIS ARTICLE DISCUSSES THE RESULTS OF STUDIES THAT CHARACTERIZED MANAGEMENT settings in municipal schools in Brazil, based on principals' responses to the contextual questionnaire of Prova Brasil (PB) 2015. Its purpose is to analyze the potential of the practices stated to contribute to the democratization of education.

The notion of democratization of education was chosen because it was considered compatible with the possibilities of exploring the items answered by municipal principals in the contextual questionnaire, with items that go beyond issues usually dealt with in democratic school management studies, such as: meetings of school councils and class councils;[1] collective preparation of the Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP); participation of families and other members of the community in the school. The responses allow us to explore other dimensions of the notion of democratization, beyond aspects restricted to participatory processes related to collective bodies that refer to shared decisions.

The democratization of basic education[2] – which has been consolidating since the second half of the 20th century – has occurred primarily through the expansion of access to and coverage of school. However, there are still many challenges to overcome, such as: provision and coverage in early childhood and upper secondary education; overcoming school failure and dropout rates; improving school infrastructure; appreciation of the teaching profession and the implementation of career plans consistent with the profile and

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Translator's note (TN): The Portuguese terms conselho escolar and conselho de classe have been translated into school council and class council.

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TN: Using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), in Brazil, the term basic education [educação básica] comprises three stages: (i) ISCED 0, or early childhood education, which includes provision for children aged 0 to 3 years (nursery schools) and 4 to 5 years (pre-school); (ii) ensino fundamental, in Portuguese, divided into ISCED 1, or primary education, for children aged 6 to 10 years, and ISCED 2, or lower secondary education, for children aged approximately 11 to 14 years; and (iii) ISCED 3, or upper secondary education, with a minimum of three years' attendance, for students aged 15 to 17 when there is no age-grade distortion

challenges of the profession. The guarantee of the right to education implies that the expansion of coverage corresponds to a set of practices, actions and relations that promote its quality, with permanence of students, who achieve school success.

The debate on the democratization of education systems and schools derives from the process of re-democratization of the Brazilian society in keeping with the principles that guided the Federal Constitution of 1988. According to the Ministry of Education (MEC) (2016), the reiteration of these principles in legal texts in the field of education – with similar textual characteristics over time, since then – can indicate that, until the current political and institutional context, the mechanisms for their implementation are not yet effective. As a legal framework, the Law on the Guidelines and Bases of National Education (9,394/1996)[3] regulates, in Title II, the principles and purposes of national education, advocating, among others, the principles of equal conditions for access and permanence in school, respect for freedom and appreciation of tolerance, democratic management of public education, guarantee of quality (BRASIL, 1996). Since this period and in the face of the tripartite functioning of education – based on intergovernmental relations between the federation, states and municipalities –, education systems have implemented in different ways the legal measures regarding these principles.

In the National Education Plan (PNE),[4] instituted by Law 13,005/2014 (BRASIL, 2014), there is a set of structuring goals and strategies to enable the democratization of education, including: goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11, which guarantee the right to quality basic education – access, universalization of literacy, and expansion of schooling and educational opportunities; goals 4 and 8, which refer to reducing inequality and valuing diversity, aiming to include everyone in the school through actions that guarantee the permanence of children and young people; goals 15 to 18, which refer to the valuation of education professionals; goals 12, 13 and 14, which focus on the need for training in higher education.

Therefore, for achieving the democratization of education, within schools, the following initiatives of teachers and management teams are essential: coherent criteria for student admission and allocation, as well as for assigning classes to teachers, so that everyone is given the same attention in teaching and learning relationships; reduction of absenteeism, dropout and failure rates, through supplementary instruction activities and incentive to remain in compulsory schooling; projects aimed at mediating situations of conflict, indiscipline and violence, with repercussions in the improvement in relations of coexistence and in school climate. However, government bodies must implement legal measures and planning actions, programs and projects

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to make these intra-school initiatives sustainable: development of appropriate policies and quality training of education professionals; appreciation of the career through plans and salaries appropriate to teaching; and, finally, the structuring of schools with sufficient material and financial resources so that endogenous initiatives can be successfully carried out.

NUANCES OF STUDIES IN THE AREA

In the state of knowledge – carried out as an unfolding of the original research –, it was possible to identify a wide variety of conceptions and methodological approaches around the theme "school management". Following, we present some studies of this inventory.[5]

Initially, there is a considerable volume of literature reviews on the topic which point out the breadth of theoretical and methodological options, problems in the designs of the studies and, at the same time, potentialities in the expansion of the debate and in the construction of knowledge in the field of public education policy (PEREZ, 2010; MAIA, 2008; MARTINS, 2011; SOUZA, 2006).

The studies that address the democratization of school management – and its consequences in schools –, on a recurring basis, treat this issue as an essential component of quality education aimed at social transformation, with different frameworks and approaches: relations between politics, power and democracy in public school (SOUZA, 2009); proposal of self-management as a democratizing strategy (PASSADOR; SALVETTI, 2013); school-to-family relationships; student indiscipline; educational helplessness; discontinuities of teaching practice and inaccuracy in school management (COELHO, 2015); school climate and ethos (GRIGOLI et al., 2010); school management, the social function of the school in contemporary times, relations of coexistence, youth culture, situations of indiscipline, conflicts and violence in public schools (MARTINS; MACHADO, 2016; MARTINS; MACHADO; FURLANETTO, 2016); the professional identity of principals as a set of representations circulating in official discourses and in the ways of being and acting of school managers in everyday work (SILVA, 2011); the presence or absence of satisfaction in the work of principals/managers of public basic education and its interference in school management (SANTANA et al., 2012); the participation of the school community through shared management (BRITO; SÍVERES, 2015; VELOSO; CRAVEIRO; RUFINO, 2012); democratic and shared management as opposed to the managerial bias that has marked education policy (LIMA; PRADO; SHIMAMOTO, 2011; CABRAL NETO; CASTRO, 2011); the role of the principal in the constitution and functioning of school councils (CABRAL NETO; CASTRO, 2011); forms of access to school principal

positions, either as an elective office chosen by school communities, as a post based on expertise to participate in *concursos* (governmentally-run teacher assignment review processes) and/or as a trust position of the hierarchy of the education system (WERLE; MANTAY; ANDRADE, 2009).

Other emerging approaches to the theme "school management" are the studies that adopt statistical models to analyze how conditions and/or characteristics of school management may affect the quality of education, although they are not yet prevalent in the area. This strand performs statistical treatment of data from external evaluations – as indicators of academic success or failure, pointing out management as an element to be considered in that process –, or develops qualitative studies to argue about the limits of these assessments: the use of standardized test results as educational management tools in schools and the regulation of school work through monetary incentives for performance (PASSONE, 2014); relations between the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB)[6] and the school context, considering the profile of the students and of the educational establishment, based on an empirical analysis that used data from Prova Brasil, from the School Census and from IDEB itself, using multiple linear regression models (ALVES; SOARES, 2007); relations between administrative and pedagogical practices of municipal primary and lower secondary schools and their contribution to student performance in Prova Brasil, through quantitative-qualitative research (data envelope analysis), which classifies schools into efficient and inefficient in relation to the selected group (SALGADO JUNIOR; NOVI; FERREIRA, 2016); relations between evaluation in basic school, its interfaces with school management and repercussions of the practices in decisions and actions on the everyday life of the school (SILVA, 2010); perceptions of principals and association with results achieved by the school through the analysis of teachers' responses to contextual questionnaires of Prova Brasil 2007, 2009 and 2011, using factorial analysis, a variable indicative of the provision of the principal's position and linear regression, relating these variables to the performance of fifth-graders, measured by the mean of mathematics tests (OLIVEIRA; CARVALHO, 2015).

Studies that discuss the effect of school on student performance (SOARES; ANDRADE, 2006; SOARES; CANDIAN, 2007) recognize limitations of statistical data from questionnaires of large-scale assessments; but such studies consider that these collections provide relevant information to analyze the effects of factors related to school management and school and pedagogical infrastructure in order to assess the quality of education.

In a historical review of external evaluations in Brazil, Gatti (2009) points out the risks of reducing the concept of educational quality to outcomes based on large-scale assessment results – which can

lead to curriculum distortion in schools, because the curricula of basic education are much more comprehensive than such texts propose. The great challenge still remains in the use by schools of the results obtained by their students to reorganize and reorient education activities.

It should be added that the other school factors – those besides the performance results in Portuguese language and mathematics and school flow – do not achieve the relevance of IDEB in the discussions about students' school success, provoking gaps in regard to assessing elements related to the other constraints that affect school management: well-trained teachers; work conditions; adequate school infrastructure; socioeconomic profile of students.

A METHODOLOGICAL STUDY: USES OF THE CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONNAIRE

MEC Ordinance 931 of March 21, 2005 (BRASIL, 2005) modified the Basic Education Assessment System (SAEB),[7] created in 1990, and determined that it be configured by the National Assessment of Basic Education (ANEB)[8] and the National Assessment of School Performance (ANRESC),[9] known as Prova Brasil. ANEB is a sample evaluation and ANRESC is a census evaluation, with Portuguese Language and Mathematics tests taken by students. In addition, the school and out-of-school conditions that affect the teaching-learning process are explored through contextual questionnaires, which cover aspects of school life, its professionals, in addition to the socioeconomic level and the social and cultural capital of the students. The questionnaires are presented in multiple-choice format, are administered to students, teachers and principals before the test, and must be collected at the end of it. At the same time, those administering the test fill out a form about the school. Such form collects data on infrastructure, safety and educational resources available (BRASIL, 2018).

By means of factorial analysis, Karino, Vinha and Laros (2014) examined the validity of the constructs of the questions of the contextual questionnaire of SAEB 2009, and pointed out the limitations of the instrument:

> […] it is necessary to invest in other forms of information collection. Using paper questionnaires and limiting responses to few teachers have reduced their participation and inhibited sincere responses because they fear being identified. Thus, we suggest the use of online questionnaires with the participation of all schoolteachers, and not only those of the evaluated grades. It is also important to raise awareness of the importance of the questionnaires. (KARINO; VINHA; LAROS, 2014, p. 293, free translation)

In historical perspective, Bonamino (2016) analyzes the contextual instruments that have been part of the Basic Education Assessment System since 1990 and highlights their methodological and theoretical-conceptual improvements. Nonetheless, she concludes that the improvement of student, teacher and principal questionnaires did not occur continuously and progressively with regard to

> [...] school and social factors associated with students' cognitive performance. It either tended to approach or to depart from some of the most important contributions of the sociology of education to the field of large-scale assessments. (BONAMINO, 2016, p. 114, free translation)

In any case, despite its limits, the contextual questionnaire administered to principals provides information that allows to examine data on: profile, training and professional trajectories; participation of families and other members of the community in the management of schools; initiatives that affect the access and permanence of students in school with guaranteed learning. To analyze the Brazilian setting regarding school management in municipal schools, we used the IBM SPSS Statistics-20 software, a program designed to carry out statistical analysis.

We chose to use the principals' contextual questionnaire of Prova Brasil because it proved adequate as a source of research since it provides information on diverse dimensions and situations of school management at national level. These instruments are available on the website of Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Anísio Teixeira (INEP – National Institute of Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira) and access to the set of responses is given through the microdata of Prova Brasil, which also provide the results of the Portuguese language and mathematics tests. This study processed a total of 55,693 responses from principals of Brazilian schools to the questionnaire of Prova Brasil. Out of the total, 1,844 (3.3%) are principals of private schools; 67 (0.1%) are principals of federal schools; 19,280 (34.6%) are principals of state schools; and 34,502 (62%) are principals of municipal schools. Out of the total number of municipal principals, 29,581 (85.7%) are allocated in schools that offer primary education (ISCED1) and only 13,739 (39.8%) in schools offering lower secondary education (ISCED 2).

The total number of questionnaires treated in the survey (43,320) is higher than the number of respondents in municipal schools (34,502) as a result of cases in which the same director works in schools providing primary and lower secondary education. The responses regarding each education level were processed separately, considering that the focus of analysis is school management (not the school), under the assumption

that principals' practices may have specificities depending on each of the levels of education offered by municipal schools.

The treatment of the information from the questionnaire allowed a rich and comprehensive description and interpretation of the management settings – although restricted to the limits identified in terms of the validity of the constructs of the questions –, which resulted in the structuring of three dimensions of analysis: a) personal data; pre-service and continuing teacher education; remuneration; professional experience and entry into the position; b) management practices reported by principals; c) conditioning factors of municipal schools.

In order to analyze these dimensions, the 111 items of the principals' questionnaire were considered first. After statistical processing and analysis of the contingency tables, we opted to work with 59 questions that qualified the object of this study.

PROFILE OF THE PRINCIPALS: BRIEF CHARACTERIZATION

In the first analysis dimension, we explored the items related to: personal data; pre-service and continuing teacher education; remuneration; professional experience and entry into the position. In summary, the information allows characterizing principals as predominantly women: 84.6% of the respondents in Primary Education (PE) and 75.8% of the respondents in Lower Secondary Education (LSE) are female. Most principals report that they are brown or white, are in the middle of their professional careers, and graduated in private higher education institutions.

Access to the position was gained mainly by nomination (56% of PE principals and 61.6% of LSE principals) or a combination of selection and nomination (5.3% of PE and 5.4% of LSE principals), which evidences the decision-making power of the municipal executive power in the choice of the professionals who act as school principals. This reiterates the limits to the expansion of democratic forms of access to the position, already indicated in other studies, revealing that the concentration of power in central bodies still predominates in the reality of municipal education systems, also characterized by political nominations by the executive power and/or representatives of the local legislative power. Other 21% of municipal PE principals and 17.7% of LSE principals claimed to have gained access to the position by election only, and 6.7% of PE and 6% of LSE principals did so through combinations of election and selection processes.

As the choice of school principals (not covered by LDB) is made in different ways by states and municipalities, it resembles a mosaic, as research in the area indicates. In some studies, the election of school

principals is invoked as a sine qua non for the democratization of school management and, in other cases, it appears as a mechanism of manipulation by local interests, which indicates that there is a pendular movement in this discussion (SILVA; MARTINS, 2014).

In 2015, most municipal principals earned three to six Brazilian minimum wages, which corresponds the income of D and C economic classes (ASSOCIAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE EMPRESAS DE PESQUISA, 2016). This range of salary remuneration may explain the fact that approximately one third of the principals at the time had a second job to supplement income. This fact warns of possible limits, in the work as principals, to the implementation of democratic initiatives, which demand, among other conditions, availability of time for school activities involving several segments in schools.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Questions 29 to 32, 53 and 54 deal with the functioning of school councils: number of meetings, composition of councils in compliance with the legislation, and the relationship of the school with families and the external community.

About 80% of PE and LSE principals held three or two school council meetings in 2015; 8.3% of PE and LSE principals claimed to hold only one meeting; about 2% of PE and LSE principals do not hold school council meetings. Also, 8.5% of PE principals and 8.1% of LSE principals stated that in their schools there is no school council.

With regard to question 30 – which focused on the extent to which principals comply with the legislation on the composition of the school council, including the participation of teachers, staff, students, and parents/guardians –, 54.3% of PE principals and 69.4% of LSE principals reported that this legal requirement is complied with. However, it is noteworthy that 31% of PE principals and 16.7% of LSE principals exclude the participation of students, keeping only teachers, staff and parents/guardians, as well as that, for 2.1% of PE and 1.5% of LSE principals, the school council is composed of teachers and parents/guardians only. These responses also corroborate research results that point out restrictions on the participation of students, especially of PE ones, in school decisions through collegiate bodies and/or specific programs (CASTELLANI, 2017; TONUCCI, 2005).

In view of the specific legal regulation at the federal level and the autonomy delegated to states and municipalities to complement legislation relevant to the subject, the data ratify the state of knowledge (MARTINS, 2011), which identified problems regarding the lack of effectiveness to structure and put into operation collegiate bodies in schools. It has already been pointed out that, in ongoing processes,

there is no effective democratic participation, since interest groups often prevail. The state of knowledge also indicated that there is no definition of what is meant by school collegiate bodies, considered both school councils and similar bodies, because descriptors appear as "collegiate body", "school collegiate body", "collectivity", "school collective", "council", "class council", "council of the school", "council of representatives", "school council", "participatory councils", "student guild" (MARTINS, 2011, free translation).

Municipal principals' responses to question 31 – number of class councils in 2015 – indicate that approximately 60.0% of PE and LSE principals held three or more class councils, in compliance with the legislation; around 19.0% of PE and LSE principals claimed to have held two meetings in the year. In this item, some data is noteworthy: 5.9% of PE and 6.6% of LSE principals held only one meeting that year and about 3% of the total number of principals claimed not to hold any meeting; 17.8% of PE and 15.1% of LSE principals stated that in their schools there is no class council. Considering that this is a collegiate body whose purpose is to bring together teachers from different subjects and the principal's team to discuss and evaluate student performance – seeking to introduce changes in the educational relations and learning, through evaluation processes that reorganize the knowledge and pedagogical practices stated in the school's PPP –, it can be inferred from the responses that, for education to become democratic, this process is still to be constructed.

The responses to question 32 on the preparation of the school's PPP show that about 43.0% of PE and LSE principals have used a ready-made model, with adaptations discussed with the school staff, and that 39% of PE and LSE principals developed a model; about 5.0% of PE and LSE principals reported that there is no PPP in the school and/or stated that they did not know how the PPP had been drawn up. The data do not allow affirming to what extent and how the adaptations of ready models and/or the development of the school's own pedagogical projects met the specific needs of the schools, in line with the principles of the current legislation to implement quality education.

Two questions addressed the opening of the school to the outside community: question 53, on how often schools carry out events for the community; and question 54, on the promotion of events in schools by the community. The questions were prepared with the alternatives *sometimes*, *always*, *almost always*, *often* and *never*. If we consider that the alternatives *always* or *almost always* can be seen as *often*, about half of the municipal principals claimed to often carry out activities for the community; in question 54, about 35% of the schools state that the community holds events in schools. As stated earlier – both from the first and the second perspectives –, it seems that the responses signal an

initiative of openness, although the questions do not allow qualifying it as dynamics established to promote a broader democratic culture involving several social actors.

Questions 37 and 39 of the principals' questionnaire provide clues about the welcoming of students by the school and their allocation by classes.

The responses regarding the criteria adopted for the admission of students by the school were explored in order to infer whether the school adopts screening mechanisms of the students who seek it. Despite the limits of interpretation of the responses, it was possible to verify that there is no tendency of selecting students for admission to school. Neighborhood enrollment, the option reported by about 40% of the principals, concentrated the greatest number of indications, possibly because this procedure complies with the norms in force in the respective education systems. In these cases, the school tends to have a clientele of students of socioeconomic and cultural level similar to that of its surroundings; however, this normalization does not prevent the existence, in the same area or region, of more homogeneous and more heterogeneous schools, as studies on this discussion report (ALVES et al., 2015; COSTA; KOSLINSKI, 2011, 2012; ÉRNICA; BATISTA, 2012; PADILHA et al., 2013).

Nonetheless, it was observed that 29.8% of the principals who work in PE and 34% of those who work in LSE establish the school's own criteria for student admission, which may represent some form of screening, since they reported that they make a selection or adopt "another criterion" of admission. Choosing these responses excluded supposedly more democratic options, such as raffle, order of arrival or neighborhood enrollment.

After analyzing how enrollment in the school occurs, we searched for elements that allowed characterizing how the classes are organized, exploring whether the criteria tend to the composition of homogeneous or heterogeneous classes, in terms of age or school performance. The formation of homogeneous classes based on students' age was the predominant response, chosen by a little over 30% of the principals, which can result in heterogeneous classes regarding student achievement, assuming that students with the same age do not necessarily have similar school performance. Together, the alternatives whose principle was heterogeneity of age or achievement obtained a little more than 23% of the total responses. However, due to the imprecision of the question, these data do not allow accurately assessing the dominant tendency in school decisions, i.e., whether they are more or less guided by democratic principles.

In question 40, principals were also asked to register the criteria used for allocating teachers to classes. This question also imposes limits on its interpretation due to how it was presented in the questionnaire.

As to form, the ten alternatives of response offered in the questions were not exclusionary, although the respondent was to opt for only one of them. In addition to the resulting restrictions on interpretation, regarding the content, we considered in the context of this study the risk of treating this issue in a restricted way. In other words, although the literature highlights teacher performance as very influential in student performance, one cannot disregard the range and complexity of factors and interactions that affect teaching and learning. Also, although the literature consulted brings contributions that support considering the allocation of "experienced teachers to slower learning groups" positive, this option may indicate that the school is choosing to form homogeneous classes by level of student performance, a practice that tends to have implications for "slow learning" classes/students, compromising its supposedly democratizing potential.

Principals' responses focused on the following alternatives: (i) teachers' choice, according to their score for length of service and education, chosen by 23.8% of PE principals and 23.3% of LSE principals; (ii) attributed by the school's principal, chosen by 16.1% of PE principals and 14.4% of LSE principals; and (iii) teacher preference, pointed out by 14.6% of PE principals and 11.1% of LSE principals.

Questions 41, 42, 43, and 45-49 deal with aspects of management practices aimed at combating school failure. They not only focus on school initiatives to address school dropout and failure, but also investigate supplementary instruction actions for students with school difficulties, which brings clues, among the alternatives of response, of the implementation or not of actions with democratizing potential.

In this sense, the following aspects stand out: the improvement of school flow indicators; the adoption of institutional measures of supplementary instruction and student attendance control.

With regard to school dropout, managers' responses to question 41 indicated that this problem has not been overcome yet and is more intensely present in LSE – only 20.7% of schools that provide PE and 8.6% that offer LSE did not report facing a school dropout problem. The information provided by the responses given to the PB 2015 questionnaire does not allow understanding how schools have been dealing with school dropout; however, they make it possible to identify how many schools have been developing actions to tackle it and the success achieved or not with these initiatives.

The responses of the school principals indicate that only 32.7% of the schools that offer PE obtained positive results from the actions developed, while 42.3% of them, despite the actions taken, did not achieve positive results or did not evaluate their results. In addition, considering that 4.2% of the institutions have not even been able to develop actions, there is a picture of non-existence or of difficulty in the

implementation of actions aimed at school dropout control in 46.5% of the schools.

This situation is even more worrying in LSE, in which only 28.4% of the schools report positive results of the actions, while 57.3% did not achieve positive results or failed to evaluate the results of the actions implemented, in addition to 5.8% which did not even control school dropout.

These data suggest that, although there are initiatives by the school to address school dropout, they have not always been effective, which is understandable in the face of the complexity of factors that condition this problem, including the extracurricular ones.

As for actions aimed at reducing school failure rates, the subject of question 42, it is possible to affirm, based on the declarations of the principals, that schools are committed to its reduction. Principals recognize that this is a problem faced by the school, which was reported by 97.2% of the PE principals and 98.8% of the LSE principals.

Nonetheless, for most principals, the actions developed to combat school failure have not been successful, since only 41.1% of the principals think that they had positive results in PE and 34.5% considered the actions in LSE satisfactory.

These percentages suggest a gradual adoption by the school of more inclusive perspectives that lead to overcoming beliefs traditionally in force in the school, which are guided by normative and meritocratic conceptions of evaluation and school justice, as studies on school failure point out (CRAHAY, 2006; GOMES, 2005; CENTRO DE ESTUDOS E PESQUISAS EM EDUCAÇÃO, CULTURA E AÇÃO COMUNITÁRIA – CENPEC, 2016a, 2016b).

Some of the actions potentially capable of influencing the fight against school failure were investigated in the questionnaire of Prova Brasil 2015. Questions 43 and 45-49 asked about supplementary instruction actions, conversations with students who miss classes, sending notices to guardians, and someone from the school visiting the student's home to check the reason for absences. Information on these aspects allows us to explore actions implemented by schools in two directions: learning and school attendance control.

Most schools reported taking supplementary instruction actions, with 89.2% of the principals indicating the use of this resource in PE and 88.1% in LSE.

Student attendance control is performed and, in the case of students who are absent, the strategies used, according to the principals' responses, focus on: (i) talking with the students who miss classes, since 93% of the principals *often*, *always* or *almost always* hold conversations with students in PE and 88.8% do it in LSE; and (ii) to inform guardians on students' absences, a measure adopted by 95.6% of PE schools and

94.4% of LSE schools. Also, 38.6% of PE schools and 33.7% of LSE schools send someone to students' homes to check their absences frequently and regularly.

CONDITIONIING FACTORS OF THE OPERATION OF MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

The contextual questionnaire answered by school principals includes questions about the characterization of the operating conditions of schools, which undoubtedly contribute to identifying factors that affect school management. Questions 67, 69 to 71, and 73 to 75 deal with issues relating to: financial and pedagogical resources available at the school; sufficiency of administrative staff and pedagogical support; teacher absenteeism and turnover. The imprecision of the formulation of the questions and alternatives of responses of the principals' questionnaire conditioned the possibilities of interpretation of the available information. Respondents were offered four possible answers to each question – "no"; "yes, a little"; "yes, moderately" and "yes, very" –, which does not allow to accurately assess the differences between the respondents' judgments.

Especially in developing countries, such as Brazil, where there is a great difference and variation of the structural conditions of schools, analysis of their operating conditions is relevant because they are one of the aspects that contribute to learning (GOMES; REGIS, 2012). In the words of Soares (2011, p. 175, free translation):

> [...] the factors that determine cognitive performance belong to three broad categories: those associated with the *school structure*, those associated with the *social groups* to which the student belongs, especially his family, and those related to the *student him/herself*. (author's italics)

From this perspective, it is worth mapping manifestations of the municipal principals about the conditioning factors of the operation of their schools.

Although the percentages of responses that indicate the presence of aspects that negatively affect school management are not negligible, as will be seen below, principals tend to positively evaluate the contents of the questions. It can be inferred that this tendency results from the proximity between school principals and municipal management bodies, which points to less contamination-free assessments, particularly in cases where access to the principal position has been gained by nomination.

Nevertheless, given the number of Brazilian municipal schools and the total number of students attending them in PE and LSE, the total number of schools subjected to poor operating conditions is not negligible even though the percentages of responses indicating deficiencies are lower.

With regard to pedagogical resources, 49.4% of PE principals and 45.1% of LSE principals stated that there were no problems; for other 50.6% of PE principals and 54.9% of LSE principals, there are insufficient pedagogical resources at some level. It should be noted that in this item it would be necessary to take into account all aspects of pedagogical resources offered by the municipal education department to support the activities in schools: laboratories with appropriate science and information technology materials; multifunctional resource rooms, with pedagogical materials and accessibility, to carry out specialized educational services, complementary or supplementary instruction, via Plan of Articulated Actions (PAR);[10] curriculum proposal and materials that delineate teaching and learning strategies; explicit evaluation criteria; continuing education in schools and within central bodies; articulation of educational programs and projects of the municipal education department with federal and state bodies. However, the question does not allow identifying more precisely what conditioning factors would affect the sufficiency or shortage of pedagogical resources in municipal schools (UNIÃO NACIONAL DOS DIRIGENTES MUNICIPAIS DE EDUCAÇÃO – UNDIME, 2017).

As regards the lack of administrative staff, the responses are divided into: principals that indicate that there is no shortage make up 56.9% of PE principals and 53.5% of LSE principals, while for 43.1% of PE and 46.5% of LSE principals there are insufficient administrative staff in their schools.

It is also possible to see different responses regarding the lack of pedagogical support staff: for 58.3% of PE principals and 53.7% of LSE principals, their schools have a sufficient number of professionals; another 41.7% of PE principals and 46.3% of LSE principals affirm that there is no pedagogical support in their schools.[11]

As mentioned above, the very formulation of questions hinders a better exploration of these percentages, which shows the opportunity of carrying out surveys on these conditions using procedures and sources complementary to those used in this study.

Regarding insufficient financial resources, for 33.4% of PE principals and 30.7% of LSE principals, this problem did not occur; for another 66.7% of PE principals and 69.3% of LSE principals, there were insufficient financial resources in the school to some extent. In this direction, it is worth highlighting problems pointed out by Adrião and Peroni (2007) about the Direct Money in School Program (PDDE)[12],

updated by Resolution/CD/FNDE 3 of February 27, 2003, which provides for the criteria and forms of transference and accountability of resources destined to the PDDE, and provides other measures. In order to receive the funds, Executing Units (UEX),[13] non-profit entities of private law with representatives of the school community, are required to increase flexibility in the management of resources transferred from the education salary[14] through the National Fund for the Development of Education (FNDE).[15] The authors point out that

> [...] fund transfers consider regional inequalities, so that the states of the North, Northeast and Center-West regions receive values slightly higher than the Federal District and the states of the South and Southeast. (ADRIÃO; PERONI, 2007, p. 258, free translation)

The authors also identified a 545% increase in the number of schools with UEX, from 1999 to 2004, with evident consequences in the management of schools.

Regarding teacher absenteeism, 64.2% of PE principals and 51.5% of LSE principals say they do not have this problem in their schools. However, for 23.2% of PE and 29.8% of LSE principals, teachers are rarely absent; for 9.1% of PE and 13% of LSE principals, the teacher absenteeism rate is moderate; for 3.5% of PE and 5.7% of LSE principals, teachers are absent very often.

It is worth considering this issue, which has been analyzed in several studies in the area. Allensworth, Poniscia and Mazzeo (2009) argue that teacher absenteeism rates may produce organizational problems, such as the difficulty of consolidating and coordinating the teachers' teamwork and the interruption of the pedagogical work done during the school year.

Regarding teacher turnover, the data indicate that, for 71.3% of PE and 66.1% of LSE principals, this problem does not exist. For other 19.5% of the principals of PE and 22.7% of LSE, there is little teacher turnover; and for 6.5% of PE and 7.9% of LSE principals, there is moderate teacher turnover. Finally, 2.8% of PE and 3.3% of LSE principals point out very high turnover rates.

Regarding teacher turnover, factors that motivate teachers to choose certain schools to the detriment of others should be considered, since extra-school conditions – socioeconomic and cultural environment, demographic composition of the population – influence the choices of professionals who can – according to their career plans, statutes of the teaching profession and/or other legislation pertinent to the exercise of teaching in the municipalities – move to schools near places considered safer to work and with fewer social problems. Yet, it is not at all improbable that

13
Abbreviation of Unidades Executoras.

14
In Portuguese, salário-educação.

15
Abbreviation of Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação.

In order to collate the data of teacher turnover, we take as reference the data of the Indicator of Teacher Regularity (IRD),[16,17] calculated by INEP, for Brazilian municipal schools. This indicator aims to evaluate the regularity of the teaching staff in basic education schools from the observation of the permanence of teachers in schools from 2012 to 2016.

There is a certain mismatch with regard to the principals' perception of teacher turnover and public data. According to the IRD, there was low teacher regularity in 14.8% of Brazilian municipal schools in the period, about 12 percentage points more than the percentage of principals who said that there was high turnover in their schools. Nevertheless, Pereira Júnior and Oliveira (2016) indicate the non-existence of standard values for establishing "acceptable" rates of teacher turnover, which can make the perceptions of the principals who answered the questionnaire vary within particular specificities and contexts.

At the other extreme, we observe that, according to INEP data, only 11.6% of Brazilian municipal schools have high teacher regularity, while, according to principals' responses, for 71.3% of PE and 66.1% of LSE schools, this problem does not exist.

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE OF BRAZILIAN MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO IRD RANGE (2016)

PERCENTAGE OF MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO THE INDICATOR OF TEACHER REGULARITY (IRD)				
LOCATION	LOW (0-2)	MEDIUM-LOW (2-3)	MEDIUM-HIGH (3-4)	HIGH (4-5)
Total	14.8	34.7	38.9	11.6
Urban	8.7	38.6	46.2	6.5
Rural	20.6	30.8	31.9	16.7

Source: Inep/Censo Escolar (2016).

Although little is known about how the organizational conditions of schools and the education system influence the permanence and turnover of teachers, studies of the area (INGERSOLL, 2001; JOHNSON, 2006) understand them as effects of other dimensions of the educational process. Factors such as the age range of teachers, school culture or climate, adequate material resources, administrative support and pedagogical resources, among others, can positively or negatively influence teachers in their choice of transfers to other schools or in their definitive exit from the public education system (PEREIRA JUNIOR; OLIVEIRA, 2016).

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CONSIDERATIONS

The findings of this study allow us to elucidate management settings of municipal schools in Brazil. The responses of municipal principals were analyzed as to the potential of the practices reported to influence the democratization of education, understood as initiatives capable of promoting the permanence of students in school, with school success, supported by collegiate and participatory relations.

In the first axis of analysis, we explored items that, in a synthetic view, allowed characterizing school principals in 2015 as predominantly female. Most professionals reported that they were brown or white and in the middle of their professional careers, with training in private higher education institutions.

Access to the position was gained mainly by nomination or combined processes of selection and nomination, which shows the decision-making power of the municipal executive power in the choice of professionals, revealing that the concentration of power in central bodies still predominates in the reality of municipal education systems. Such concentration is also characterized by political nominations by the executive power and/or representatives of the local legislative body.

In the second axis of analysis, the responses were grouped by content and examined, which made it possible to explore management settings and the democratic potential of current practices in municipal schools, despite bearing in mind the limitations arising from the formulation of some questions.

With regard to school councils, the research data confirm other studies in the area that analyze problems with the structuring and functioning of the institutional mechanisms of representation in schools.[18] The responses also corroborate research findings that point out restrictions on student participation, mainly of those in primary education, in school decisions through collegiate bodies and/or specific programs.

The responses of municipal principals to the question about the class council, a collegiate body that aims to bring together teachers of various subjects and the management team to discuss and evaluate student performance, indicate that this process is still to be constructed to allow achieving the democratization of education.

Responses to questions about school openness to the outside community signal an openness initiative, although the questions do not allow qualifying it as dynamics instituted to promote a broader democratic culture involving several social actors.

The questions about the welcoming of students by the school and their allocation by classes, despite the limits of interpretation of the responses, allowed us to verify that, on the one hand, at the moment of student admission, there is no tendency of selection by the school and,

18
Studies and research that supported the discussion of information from the questionnaires have been referenced in the report.

on the other hand, student age or school performance influence the composition of homogeneous or heterogeneous classes.

With regard to management practices aimed at combating school failure – school initiatives to deal with school dropout and failure, and supplementary instruction actions –, the data suggest a gradual process of adoption by the school of more inclusive perspectives that move towards overcoming the beliefs traditionally in force in the school context, guided by normative and meritocratic conceptions of evaluation and school justice, as the research and specialized literature on school failure referenced in this work indicate.

In the third axis of analysis, we explored responses that allowed us to examine the working conditions of schools that contribute to implementing democratic practices and establishing a culture that strengthens participatory and collegial relations.

It can be inferred that trends of positive appreciation on the part of principals regarding the contents of these questions indicate proximity between the school principals and the municipal management bodies, which may have led to less contamination-free evaluations, in particular in cases in which access to the principal position was gained by nomination, as shown by the data from the first dimension of analysis.

The elements that shaped the school management settings call for studies that explore the contexts in which they are included, investigating relations and articulations with the implementation of policies at the municipal level. Since the 1988 Constitution – which granted autonomy to municipalities and centrality to the legislative bodies of municipalities, providing for the system of collaboration of federated entities in the provision of education –, there has been a debate about possibilities and limits of the municipal sphere in the formulation and management of public policy. Part of this debate has constantly stressed the need to provide federated entities with strategies and mechanisms for public action that support intergovernmental relations, without harming the autonomy of the municipalities, also avoiding the overlapping of measures and programs in the localities.

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