

Educational management and school effectiveness: a case study in municipal schools of Duque de Caxias**Gestão educacional e eficácia escolar: um estudo de caso nas escolas municipais de Duque de Caxias**

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ABSTRACT

This article is the result of an investigation¹ that evaluated the school effectiveness in the municipal schools of Duque de Caxias that obtained the highest Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) in 2009 through the analysis of the factors that are directly associated to the effectiveness in schools, such as organization, school management, and pedagogical emphasis. Two schools were surveyed, intentionally chosen, because the purpose of the work was to map the effective strategies of educational management in schools with higher performance. The data are originated from quantitative and qualitative researches that were carried out in 2011 and 2012 in these schools. The results showed that the school effectiveness is due to the committed work of the team, the active role of the manager, the involvement of the family in school, the differentiated teaching methodologies, and the participatory planning.

Keywords: Educational Management; School Effectiveness; Municipal Schools.

RESUMO

Este artigo é resultado de uma investigação que avaliou a eficácia da escola nas escolas municipais de Duque de Caxias que obteve o maior Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica (IDEB) em 2009 por meio da análise dos fatores que estão diretamente associados à eficácia nas escolas, como organização, gestão escolar e ênfase pedagógica. Duas escolas foram pesquisadas, intencionalmente escolhidas, pois o objetivo do trabalho foi mapear as estratégias efetivas de gestão educacional nas escolas com maior desempenho. Os dados são provenientes de pesquisas quantitativas e qualitativas que foram realizadas em 2011 e 2012 nessas escolas. Os resultados mostraram que a eficácia da escola se deve ao comprometimento do trabalho da equipe, ao papel ativo do gestor, ao envolvimento da família na escola, às metodologias diferenciadas de ensino e ao planejamento participativo.

Palavras-chave: Gestão Educacional; Eficácia escolar; Escolas Municipais.

1 INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of the educational system is a solid base for the sustainable development of nations considered developed. In spite of the social, economic, scientific, and technological advances, Brazil deals with major difficulties to distribute more evenly its productive resources in order to provide conditions of social, economic, and technological growth for all its citizens.

An important element in the academic investigations² about school effectiveness is the understanding that a school is effective when it achieves the integral development of its students, in

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² Torrecilla, Francisco Javier Murillo. Um panorama da pesquisa Ibero-Americana sobre eficácia escolar. In: Brooke, Nigel; Soares, José Francisco (orgs.). **Pesquisa em eficácia escolar**: origem e trajetórias. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2008.

group or individually, larger than would be expected, taking into account prior knowledge, social, economical, cultural, and family situation.

Sammons (2008, p.351-352) demonstrated, in her studies about school effectiveness, eleven factors interrelated to management and educational evaluation, and that are key-factors for schools called effective; they are: professional leadership, goals and shared visions, learning environment, concentration on teaching and learning, teaching and clear objectives, high expectations, positive incentive, monitoring of progress, rights and responsibilities of the student, home-school partnership, and a learning-oriented organization.

The management of effective schools emphasizes an organized and school-oriented structure, whose purpose is to maximize the school performance of the students, aiming the accomplishment of the educational mission of learning. For this purpose, the integration and participation of all those involve in school is essential.

Hopkins *et al* (apud REYNOLDS and TEDDLIE, 2008) revealed in their researches that a participatory and democratic management at school is associated to school effectiveness. Effective educative organizations have a mission established and shared by all, a sense of community, of cooperation among people, and good communication among team members.

According to Libâneo (2001, p.105), democratic and participative management requires the involvement of the school community in the decision-making process of the school, an interactive teaching practice, and the collective construction of school guidelines through consensus, intersubjective, and dialogic processes.

School effectiveness was defined as main object of this research, having as support of analysis the organization and educational management in the context of municipal schools of the city of Duque de Caxias, in the Baixada Fluminense.

2 EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: CONCEPT AND EVOLUTION

The study of school as an organization is not new. Research about school administration date back to the pioneers of New Education in the 1930s. These studies were carried out within the scope of School Administration, and they were marked by a more bureaucratic and functionalist conception, bringing the school closer to a business organization.

In the beginning of the 1980s, with the discussions about curricular reform of Pedagogy and Graduation courses, the discipline came to be called Pedagogical Work Organization or School Work Organization in many places, adopting a scientific-rational approach, restricting to a formal and bureaucratic management of the school, and, in a second moment, in this decade, a more critical, social, and political approach.

In the first approach, school organization was taken as an objective, neutral, and technical reality that functions rationally; therefore, it could be planned, organized, and controlled in order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, as a conventional company. Schools that operated in this direction gave much weight to the organizational structure: organization chart of positions and functions, hierarchy of functions, norms and regulations, centralization of decisions, minimal participation of the people who work at school, and top-down action plans. However, this model is still very common in schools.

The second approach, of socio-political nature, looked at school as a system that aggregated people, emphasizing the intentionality and social interactions that happened among them. In this sense, school organization would not be totally functional and objective, a neutral element to be observed, but a social construction carried out by teachers, students, parents, and members of the surrounding community.

In the context of Brazilian education, it has been dedicated to the subject of educational management as a new concept based on the second approach, which surpasses the limited approach of school administration of the first approach presented above. From the understanding that educational problems are complex, considering that they demand global and comprehensive vision, as well as articulated, dynamic, and participative action.

In reality, according to Luck (2006), educational management emerges to overcome the need of:

- a) Clear and competent guidance and leadership, exercised based on democratic and participative educative principles;
- b) Advantage theoretical-methodological referential for the organization and guidance of work in education;
- c) A perspective of effective overcoming of daily difficulties by the adoption of strategic mechanisms and methods for the solution of problems in school.

In this direction, still according to Luck (2006, p.25), educational management corresponds to the field of work responsible for establishing the direction and mobilization capable of sustaining and dynamizing the way of being and doing of the teaching systems of schools in order to carry out joint, associated, and articulated actions, aiming at the common goal of quality teaching and its results.

Management of educational systems constitutes a field of work that aims to promote organization, mobilization, and articulation of all the material and human conditions necessary to ensure the advancement of the educational processes.

3 DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOL

Democratic management of education is linked to the establishment of legal and institutional mechanisms and to the organization of actions that trigger social participation, such as: formulation of educational politics, planning, decision-making, definition of the use of resources and investment needs, execution of collective deliberations, school evaluation, democratization of access, strategies that guarantee the permanence in school, and debate on the quality of the education.

Luck (2006, p.107) highlights some principles for an autonomous and democratic management:

Commitment: it corresponds to an attitude of feeling responsible and involved by the education process as a whole and by its results.

Competency: it is associated to professionalization, continuing education, and the search for the improvement of professional and personal capacity.

Leadership: the exercise of influence, based on ethical principles, to the benefit of the school community.

Collective mobilization: integrated action of actions, team effort to achieve effective results in school.

Transparency: the openness and dissemination of the way of acting, the ideas that support the actions, the desired results, and the interests.

Strategic vision: it implies a forward-looking and comprehensive view of reality. It is a condition for the school to respond to its broader challenges rather than close to self-indulgence.

Proactive vision: it consists in a positive orientation of its own capacity to overcome challenges, take responsibilities, and creatively face them.

Initiative: without the capacity to take initiative in the search for solutions to the observed difficulties, and without the capacity to be involved, based on this principle, in the effort for this solution, the autonomy ceases to exist.

Creativity: it implies looking at reality differently and seeking new work alternatives in it.

Luck (2006, p.114) enumerates some strategies for the construction of autonomy in a democratic school management:

Organization of collegiate management mechanism: school needs to create and operate collegiate management mechanisms, such as: school council, associations, partnerships, extra-class activities committee, project committee, etc., because autonomous action in democratic management is carried out through collective and consensual decision-making.

Formation of partnerships: it is important to firm agreement with different people and organizations for the continuous improvement of schools. The support from the local community

and government agencies strengthens the democratic and collective action at school. The internal and external partners will contribute directly and indirectly to the promotion of an effective school.

Development of community and team spirit: the work to be performed at school must involve the whole school community. The collective commitment is essential for the accomplishment of the school mission.

Development of self-management skills: managers need to promote the development of skills among school employees who associate themselves with the principles, strategies, and characteristics explained in the construction of autonomy.

Democratic management in school, aiming at the autonomy of the institution, establishes quality parameters to the collective service, guiding the responsibilities of every professional of the school, establishing opportunities for the exercise of creativity, spirit of innovation, of renewal of pedagogical practices, and, especially, of the social commitment with education.

4 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND LEADERSHIP AT SCHOOL

Mortimore (apud Franco et al, 2007, p.280) affirms that an effective school "is the one that enables its students to present educational performance beyond expectations, given the social origin of the students, and the social composition of the student body of the school³", in other words, it is the place where the student can learn, not fail the school year, and attend regularly.

Sammons (2008, p.351-352) points out eleven essential factors for schools considered effective; they are:

1. **Professional leadership:** school manager must possess a firm and objective attitude, promote the collective participation, and be active in school daily life.
2. **Objectives and shared visions:** the school must have well-defined purposes directed towards a consistent and collaborative pedagogical practice.
3. **Learning environment:** the work environment must be attractive, harmonious, and orderly.
4. **Focus on teaching and learning:** it must focus on the performance and invest in time so that learning has effective results.
5. **Teaching and clear objectives:** the classes must be well structured, and teaching must favor the cultural baggage of the students just as the pedagogical organization needs to be efficient and have clear objectives.

³ Text translated from Portuguese by the authors.

6. **High expectations:** the school must be enterprising; it must have a well-defined vision of where it intends to go and of the purposes of the educational mission, and it must stimulate motivational practices that constantly challenge the school community.
7. **Positive incentive:** it is necessary to have constant feedback, that ethical behaviors are favored in the work environment, and that the process of recognition of people is installed in the daily practice.
8. **Monitoring progress:** the continuous evaluation must be conducted through research on student and school performance.
9. **Rights and responsibilities of the student:** it is necessary to know how to work the student's self-esteem, to give notions of responsibility, as well as to control the activities done by them, giving help and necessary support in order to stimulate their constant learning.
10. **Home-school partnership:** parents must be involved in their children's learning.
11. **A learning-oriented organization:** the management of people must be focused on the development of the school, with a cooperative environment of exchanging and sharing of experiences and knowledge.

The school has the purpose of achieving certain objectives, which give meaning to its organization and decision-making, regarding the specificity of its curriculum and school programs, the administrative and pedagogical structure, the teaching quality, the qualification of its professionals, etc.

Efficient guidance for the achievement of objectives and results is particularly relevant for the educational manager, teachers, and pedagogical team, who perform high responsibility and commitment roles at school, since the lack of guidance can lead to inefficient and useless activities.

The school manager performs functions of a complex nature, in which, according to Dias (2002, p.274), at least three roles can be distinguished within this performance: of authority, of educator, and of administrator.

The manager as a school **authority** has a large sum of responsibilities. In fact, he is the responsible for everything that happens in school. On special occasions, he represents the school itself: when he attends the solemnities to which he is invited in the role of school principal; when granting certificates and diplomas, and when addressing to other entities to deal with matters of interest for the school. In these situations, he acts as a school authority because he personifies the institution to which he belongs.

A school manager, first of all, is an **educator**. He also participates in the core activities of his educational institution. His way of conducting school has profound repercussion in the formation of the students. In a school where there is a climate of repression, students may be led into a submissive posture, incompatible with the objectives of a democratic and participatory school. The management has no way of disassociating itself from the educational activities because the style of management directly influences this process. The manager needs to be aware of the educative consequences of his decisions and actions. Therefore, it is possible to understand the importance of the manager being, above all, an educator, concerned with the well-being of the students, not only an administrator in search of efficiency.

The school has objectives to achieve, and it is responsibility of the school principal to take the lead to ensure the achievement of these goals. Planning, organization of work, coordination of efforts, and evaluation of results are part of his daily life, hence, their role as **administrator** of the entire educational process.

A good management integrates so completely into the school activity that it cannot be perceived in an isolated way. Often, school employees coexist with a competent principal, admiring him as a person, praising his actions even though they do not have a clear perception of them. It may seem to them that the main function of the manager is to command, and that his actions in school may be superfluous, after all, the manager has nothing to do in a school where everyone fulfill their obligations. However, if the management is incompetent, in a short period of time, the difficulties will be such that it will completely dismantle the structure set up very carefully in the daily life of the school. Hence, what could be a dispensable adornment becomes essential for the good functioning of the school.

Education is clearly a team effort, in which all of the school community participates. It is a joint work, which becomes more productive the more the team is able to work in an integrated way. The structuring of administrative and pedagogical work is not necessarily a problem only for the manager; it is for everyone who does, feels, and acts in school.

The responsibility of the school team as a whole must be present in school planning, in making decisions that affect the life in school, in the verification of learning, in the improvement in the teaching process, and in the contact with the parents of students and other elements of the community. Democratic management that ensures the participation of everyone has conditions to lead the school to a path of quality and efficiency in the educational process.

5 METHODOLOGY

The population that was object of this research comprised the municipal schools of Duque de Caxias that obtained the highest grades in the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) in 2009 in the first cycle of elementary school. The schools requested anonymity, therefore, they were denominated schools A and B. Data were collected in the schools in 2011 and 2012.

A survey with closed and open questions was elaborated for the whole pedagogical team. The data obtained by the application of the surveys were computerized in a database using the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version for Windows.

In the quantitative approach, it was made a descriptive statistical analysis (rate, graphics, and tables), and, in the qualitative approach, the analysis of the content was made.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The school teams of schools A and B have the following profile: female (82,3%), age over 35 (60,7%), married (52,7%), specialists (56,6%), teachers (84,4%), average service time over 10 years, and receive on average between 3-6 minimum wage.

The data collected thought the subjective questions of the surveys showed that the team of school A is intricate, has a good relationship among all the components of the school, and the climate is considered satisfactory and balanced. In addition, they believe that a good climate provides a better development in the educational process, and school integration, management style, and team commitment are the influential points of school effectiveness.

The School A's team comprehends **school effectiveness** as the result of learning, as the principal said: "*it is when the student really has the right to learn... the teacher is able to pass the right orientation... and he can learn it*". Furthermore, the teachers affirm that the effectiveness is related to the process of social transformation, together with efficient work and the result of approval in the evaluations. One teacher made the following report:

"... The school has to fulfill its role as integrant part of the society to transform; it has to be a transforming agent of the society. Then, there is school effectiveness. Because, in addition to fulfilling the role of passing content, to be helping, and contributing in the personal and intellectual education of the student, we are also building the transformation of the society".

Regarding the strategies for achievement of **effective results**, the school understands that the work of the teachers is essential in this process. The commitment of the team, the creation of differentiated methodologies, the formation of teachers, the construction of projects, the integration of the school with the parents and the community, the union and the harmonious relationship are the elements of school effectiveness.

In relation to the factors **that favor educational success**, in their speech, the school team pointed out the teacher's attendance, the pleasure of teaching, of being in school, the school's interaction with the community, the support of the school leadership, and the team spirit in the working environment.

Regarding the factors **that interfere in the educative success**, the team presented questions related to infrastructure, absence of parents, constant absence of students, and their lack of interest in studies.

The team of School B understands **school effectiveness** as the result of the achievement of the goals proposed in the pedagogical project. In the vision of the school principal, it reaches the effectiveness "*When the school manages to achieve its objectives. When the school goes beyond the reality of the in-school wall, and it is capable of forming citizens*". One teacher adds:

"I believe that school effectiveness refers to the fulfillment of a work plan, a pedagogical proposal that is put into practice. And, effectively when the students can learn, can develop themselves as citizens, as people. So, when there is this harmony among the planning, the results, and the development of the students in society, there is effectiveness".

In the evaluation of another teacher, school effectiveness:

"It is present when, in addition to the concern with curricular content, the institution aims at understanding and satisfying the student in a global way, with moral and ethical values, aiming at a critical citizen, and who intends to change his life".

With regard to strategies to obtain **effective results**, the school B understands that establishing clear and achievable objectives is essential in obtaining these results. In addition, it is also necessary: greater involvement of school and family, maintain a pleasant work environment, focus on the student, be based on the pedagogical proposal of the school, and, of course, an excellent teaching performance.

In relation to the factors **that favor educational success**, the team presented: participatory planning, commitment of the team, performance of the teachers, and concern with the students' necessities.

Regarding the factors that **hinder the educational success**, they point out: the lack of public politics to meet local necessities, violence, scarce resources (lack of water, food, and material), the lack of specialized professionals (speech therapists and psychologists), and the lack of family commitment.

7 CONCLUSIONS

It is possible to observe the intrinsic relation between educational management and school effectiveness in every researched school. Thus, the performance of the manager must be highlighted as far as his role precisely should be to be able to build a participatory and collaborative environment. For this reason, the recognition of his leadership by all the subjects involved in the school is essential. This leadership must represent his capacity of coordinating and encouraging the participation and the exercise of the autonomy of various school subjects.

The principles of autonomy and democracy are fundamental to an effective school management. These principles enable members of the school community to demonstrate their responsibility in educational doing, acting, innovating, and making conscious and committed collective decisions to better results. The exercise of these practices is the thermometer of the school's competence and of its professionals in fulfilling their goals and purposes.

A leadership that presents as characteristics the involvement with school questions and concern with the construction of the participation of other professionals of education in school, among others, is able to put in practice pedagogical proposals that can modify the academic results of the students, and, therefore, contribute to the effectiveness of the school.

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