

Management and leadership for school transformation in times of COVID-19

Gestión y liderazgo para la transformación de la escuela en tiempos de COVID-19

Zamudio Espinoza, Zulma Gisella

D. candidate in Education, Universidad César Vallejo, Lima, Peru, zgiselle12@ucvvirtual.edu.pe, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1518-6691>

Padilla Caballero, Jesús Emilio Agustín

PhD. in Ethics and Social Responsibility and Human Rights, Universidad César Vallejo, Lima, Peru, jpadillac@ucv.edu.pe, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9756-8772>

Espinoza Chávez Richard Carlos

M.A., in Educational Administration, teacher, Instituto de Educación Superior Pedagógico Público "Hermilio Valdizán", Lima, Peru, respinozach18@ucvvirtual.edu.pe, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6238-7058>

Peralta Martinez, Maykhol

Master in education with mention in teaching and educational management, Lima, Peru, mperalta7@ucvvirtual.edu.pe, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1819-1402>

Abstract

The article gives a public mention of the experiences that in management and leadership have been applied in the world in the virtual context. The objective is to develop a systematic review considering the role of school leadership in improving the school and the education system in the current health context due to



Imaginario Social
Publishing entity
University of Guayaquil -
REDICME (reg-red-18-0061)

e-ISSN: 2737-6362
July - December 2021 Vol. 4-2-2021
<http://revista-imaginariosocial.com/index.php/es/index>

Receipt: February 05, 2021
Acceptance: April 15, 2021

52-70

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Covid-19. The study was qualitative and systematic review. The search was done in Google Scholar and the selection of the articles was made using the terms "leadership education" and "Covid-19" and its english equivalent "leadership", "education" and "Covid-19"; both forms using Boolean operator "AND". In the results, most studies emphasized the role of school leadership in improving the school and the educational system in the face of the Covid-19 scenario, considering as common aspects, the sense of service, the distribution of responsibilities and the socio-emotional management during the interaction as fundamental elements for afron.

Keywords: Leadership, education, Covid-19

Resumen

El artículo da a conocer las experiencias que en gestión y liderazgo se han venido aplicando en el mundo en el contexto virtual. El objetivo es desarrollar una revisión sistemática considerando el rol del liderazgo escolar en la mejora de la escuela y del sistema educativo en el contexto sanitario actual por Covid-19. El estudio fue de enfoque cualitativo y de tipo revisión sistemática. La búsqueda se realizó en Google Académico y la selección de los artículos se realizó utilizando los términos “liderazgo educación” y “Covid-19” y su equivalente en inglés “leadership”, “education” y “Covid-19”; ambas formas utilizando operador booleano “AND”. En los resultados la mayoría de estudios enfatizaron el rol del liderazgo escolar en la mejora de la escuela y del sistema educativo frente al escenario Covid-19, considerando como aspectos comunes, el sentido de servicio, la distribución de responsabilidades y el manejo socioemocional durante la interacción como elementos fundamentales para afrontar el proceso de transformación de la escuela. También se ha evidenciado las condiciones idóneas para gestionar eficazmente la escuela, señalándose hasta tres aspectos; interpersonal, recursos tecnológicos y estrategia pedagógica. Concluyéndose que existen experiencias de gestión y liderazgo muy importantes que deberían ser consideradas ante este nuevo escenario educativo.

Palabras clave: Liderazgo, educación, Covid-19.

Introduction

Education and transformation are omnipresent terms in the discourse of emerging societies; innovation and reflection are key words in the dynamics of modern societies. These are exposed to constant change, which brings with it the challenge of permanently optimizing states, processes and services. The intellectual, social and emotional competencies of individuals are fundamental to achieve this and to adapt to today's fast-paced demands. They are, in essence, the pillar of a society's success or failure. Thus, meeting the educational demand in a satisfactory manner and, with it, the continuous development of the education sector and the school are core issues in all development discourse and practice. It is well known that the educational success of a society translates into equal opportunities, access to welfare, integration and sustained development, but what paths should we trace towards such success and the continuous development of education in times of the Covid-19 pandemic?

This leads us to look at school management from a different perspective, as other variables are added that force us to rethink the ways of providing educational services that focus on learning. As Barber and Mourshed (2008) point out. "Success will go to the people and countries that are quick to adapt, moderate their complaints and are open to change. The task for governments will be to ensure that countries rise to this challenge" (p. 6). Research on educational effectiveness shows that teacher quality is the factor with the greatest impact on learning. The training and professional development of in-service teachers thus become key components in the design, development and improvement of school quality. On the other hand, the experience of successful educational systems places school leadership as the second factor influencing learning. Such systems have a culture of organizational leadership and a school administration focused on and committed to learning and the student, with pedagogical objectives as the ultimate goal. Empirical evidence has shown that school leadership with these traits has positive effects on learning, teaching quality and organizational climate in the educational community (Barber & Mourshed, 2008; Bolívar, 2010; Horn & Marfán, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Marzano, McNulty & Waters, 2005; Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008).

In this sense, teacher training and performance, as well as school leadership, are essential points in the educational agenda of developing countries, which face the great challenge of raising their educational levels in an accelerated and significant manner, Even more so now that the education system is vulnerable as a result of the global pandemic caused by Covid-19, which requires adequately trained and high performance teachers, and pedagogical leaders in school management, with the necessary autonomy to be able to decide and execute pertinent actions with the sole purpose of ensuring that the teaching-learning processes do not stop and that education does not stop.

Studying these issues involves analyzing aspects such as leadership, the normative framework on which managers base their work, and transformation processes in the face of the health crisis. The main idea is to conceive the school as an autonomous and empowered organization, which learns and innovates with its own resources and is managed in a democratic and participatory manner (Fend, 1986, as cited in Rolff, 2012a); all this considering the new scenarios and contexts presented in society due to the pandemic.

Faced with this context, the directors have had to assume a frontline role and have sufficient autonomy to transfer a face-to-face education to a virtual scenario, adapting new realities and adapting actions, in addition to the deficient management of technological tools, but all these problems have been overcome little by little through collaborative work, in which the entire educational community as a whole joins forces with the sole purpose of being able to reach the students in this new scenario.

Usually, school leadership has been described as an individual trait attributed to professionals who perform managerial functions in the educational context (Bolívar, López & Murillo, 2013), (Gamboa et al., 2019), however, in contemporary times this conception has been expanded to a more shared vision where each educational actor contributes with his or her particular capabilities to the effective achievement of learning (Anderson, 2010). From the contextual scope, leadership focused on strengthening processes with a view to generating improvements that lead to organizational quality; however, now the participation of the environment in school management has been included in this conception (Hallinger & Heck, 2011). In

general, the focus of the leader's performance is no longer on the functioning of the educational institution but on the learning achievements of the students. In this scenario, up to 4 theoretical models of leadership stand out: transactional leadership, transformational leadership, situational leadership and distributed leadership.

Transactional leadership is based on an incentive policy that conditions performance actions (Ramos, 2005), which can be generated either as a contingent reward or by direction by exception (Bass, 2000). In short, transactional leaders give priority to the impersonal aspect of management under the power conferred to their position, (Barros & Turpo, 2017), (Bolívar, 2010).

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, orients its actions towards the fulfillment of objectives, generating in turn spaces for the professional and personal growth of teachers. In this sense, it is concerned with understanding them, encourages teachers to transcend and innovate, and is concerned with the self-realization of all from horizontal and close relationships (Molero, 2011). According to Bass (2000), for transformational leadership to be exercised, the following behaviors should be fostered: charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, which in school environments would take the form of the development of a participatory style associated with a particular charisma to motivate and give confidence to the group (Evans, 2015).

Situational leadership, on the other hand, contemplates processes through which it is intended to generate influence over educational actors to achieve goals considering specific situations. In view of this, it can be said that the leader will be effective to the extent that he/she achieves objectives in any situation he/she faces and of which he/she is a part. This implies processes of adjustment of leadership styles to the situation faced and the level of maturity of the people in charge, since only this ensures effectiveness (Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 1998).

Distributed leadership indicates that leadership is exercised through interaction and implies the distribution of functions, whereby leadership is distributed among managers, teachers and other educational actors (Spillane et al., 2004). Thus, leadership is dispersed because it is not concentrated at a single level since decisions are decentralized. It emphasizes the practice of delegation and collaboration within a

democratic and collaborative context (Gronn, 2002). Under this type of leadership, aspects such as context, culture, change, relationships and activity are related (Leithwood, 2009).

In addition, another current has been generated that conceives managerial leadership focused on learning, which has also been called pedagogical leadership, which is characterized by the orientation of leadership towards student learning and the generation of conditions for this to be possible (Iranzo, Tierno & Barrios, 2014).

Managerial leadership, accredited by empirical research as the most effective in terms of school performance and educational systems, is an expression of the new paradigms of education and school. We find in it a richer leadership profile, a genuine leadership for learning, which through teacher leadership and professional learning communities extends and distributes beyond school management (Bolívar, 2010).

The presence of leadership is critical not only to initiate and stimulate change in the system, but also to sustain the change and its effects on behavior and outcomes. Internationally, a number of studies and papers propose various means to improve the effectiveness of school leadership, including incentives and salary increases, development of standards of practice, initial and ongoing training linked to these standards, and the granting of greater autonomy over school management.

It is necessary to think about managerial leadership in schools in a more distributed and collaborative way, taking into account not only the actions but also the influence exerted by the individuals and groups that make up the leading team on the members of the educational community and on the school quality of the establishment. The complexity of the current society immersed according to Galindo, Ruiz, and Ruiz (2017) in the fourth industrial revolution, will have to face a series of challenges and diatribes that are irreversibly amalgamated and with it the consent of changes is gestated, where technologies and the increasing use of them leads to differentiate the members of this context between those who possess certain digital competences and the others who opprobriously do not know the impact of their magnitude in the current context (Galindo, Ruiz & Ruiz, 2017); but in one way or another they are aware of their relevance in many aspects of their environment, since the application alone of the

enormous potential of this field of knowledge rooted in technological productivity is, on the one hand, solving a series of needs via the digitization of processes (Sicilia et al., 2018).

Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the goal of increasing student learning and achievement. Such team leadership consists of three intentional foci of development: individual development; collaboration or team development; and organizational development. Teacher leadership emerges naturally and organically, as they make their presence felt when they take the initiative to address a problem and set a new course of action. They do not have positional authority; their influence derives from the influence they demand from their colleagues through their experience and practice. They build trust in both formal and informal situations, honing their skills through regular collaboration with peers and managers.

In all good schools, there are teachers who have a vision beyond their own classroom, since they recognize that students' experiences in school do not depend only on the interaction with teachers, but on more factors. It is this awareness that moves teachers to adopt a role as active agents of change (Danielson, 2006). Sometimes on their own initiative, sometimes within a more formal structure, these professionals will find a variety of ways to exercise teacher leadership. York Barr and Duke (2004) define it as follows: Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the goal of increasing student learning and achievement. Such team leadership work consists of three intentional foci of development: individual development; collaboration or team development; and organizational development. (P. 287-288)

Teacher leadership is about creating the conditions and contexts for teachers to learn new practices, in a learning organization, as a professional community. In one of the most powerful proposals on leadership, Elmore (2010) argues that "if the goal of leadership is the improvement of teaching practice and performance, then the really important skills and knowledge are those related to creating an environment for

learning focused on clear expectations for teaching. All other skills are instrumental" (p. 124).

Tasks performed by lead teachers include overseeing improvement efforts, selecting curriculum, and participating in coordination meetings.

Educational management involves decision-making processes and execution of activities that allow the development of pedagogical practices aimed at quality education (Botero, 2009). Its execution implies organization and interaction under a single system of processes (Jiménez, 2008) where knowledge, ethics, performance and policies leading to continuous improvement and innovation converge (Unesco, 2000). It is theoretically based on the perspectives of quality management through leadership and operational practices aimed at continuous improvement and excellence (Rojas, 2006) and its deepest foundations are based on the approaches of Juran (1995), Deming (1989) and Crosby (1989) on total quality. According to Rojas (2006), educational management implies taking into account the user-centered approach, leadership, participation of educational stakeholders, process approach and continuous improvement.

In the Peruvian context, these aspects are included in the Framework for Good Managerial Performance, which is an essential element of the reform of the educational institution within the framework of the teacher development policies prioritized by the Education Sector. In the Multiannual Sectoral Strategic Plan for Education (PESEM) 2012-2016, it is proposed for the management area "to ensure that educational institutions assume responsibility for managing change in pedagogical processes, focusing the entire organization on learning." (MINEDU, 2012b, p. 52). Hence, the first result of the reform of the educational institution in this area refers to the need to have selected, trained and organized managers. Thus, the Good Management Performance Framework becomes a strategic tool for the implementation of a comprehensive management development policy.

It is important to point out that the achievement of the domains and the development of the proposed competencies will be carried out gradually, since managers require a

certain amount of time to acquire new knowledge, develop skills and awaken new motivations.

Therefore, the Good Managerial Performance Framework suggests inputs for the evaluation of access, ratification and implementation of training programs through the competencies and performances presented.

The purposes that determine the scope of this document are:

1. Establish a shared vision on pedagogical leadership focused on learning, which revalues the importance of the management role in the school.
2. Identify the practices of an effective manager, guiding the professional development of managers.
3. Guide the selection, performance evaluation, training and professional development processes for managers.

In its structure, the Good Principal Performance Framework defines the domains, competencies and performances with their corresponding descriptors, which characterize an effective school management that reinforces the leadership of the principals of the country's basic education institutions.

Materials and Methods

The research was qualitative in approach and of the systematic review type, which was defined by Newell & Burnard (2006) as a process of identifying the fundamentals of a literature review of interest to the practice, searching for and extracting the most relevant according to criteria that have been evaluated and respected by others.

Systematic reviews, according to Beltrán (2005), provide a rational synthesis of basic research. It overcomes the imitations of narrative reviews by applying rigorous standards to secondary research (where the unit of study is other research studies) as if they were applied to primary research studies (original studies). In this way, the exercise of leadership in educational institutions is studied taking as a source, various scientific publications on the subject. The categories that will allow the systematic

review of each of the articles are: problem, objective, theories addressed, type and design, participants, techniques and instruments, results.

The objective of the study is to explore the state in which the leadership of educational institutions is being assumed as a result of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It seeks to identify those relevant aspects that allow the transformation of the school in order to avoid stopping the educational service at the regular education levels.

The selection of articles was made using the terms "leadership", "education" and "Covid-19" and their equivalent in English "leadership", "education" and "Covid-19"; both forms using the Boolean operator "AND". The database used was Google Scholar, first with the terms in Spanish and then in English. The search was limited to full texts published in 2020.

The criterion for including a publication was to be a quantitative or qualitative scientific article; publications such as books, essays, theses, governmental communications were discarded. Thus, the articles selected had terms or themes associated with educational leadership in the Covid-19 context.

The search identified 21 articles in Spanish and 4 in English when using the search terms in Spanish; and 3 articles in Spanish and 26 in English when using the search terms in English. A total of 24 articles were obtained in Spanish and 30 in English, making a total of 54 in all, of which 44 were eliminated, considering the criteria indicated above.

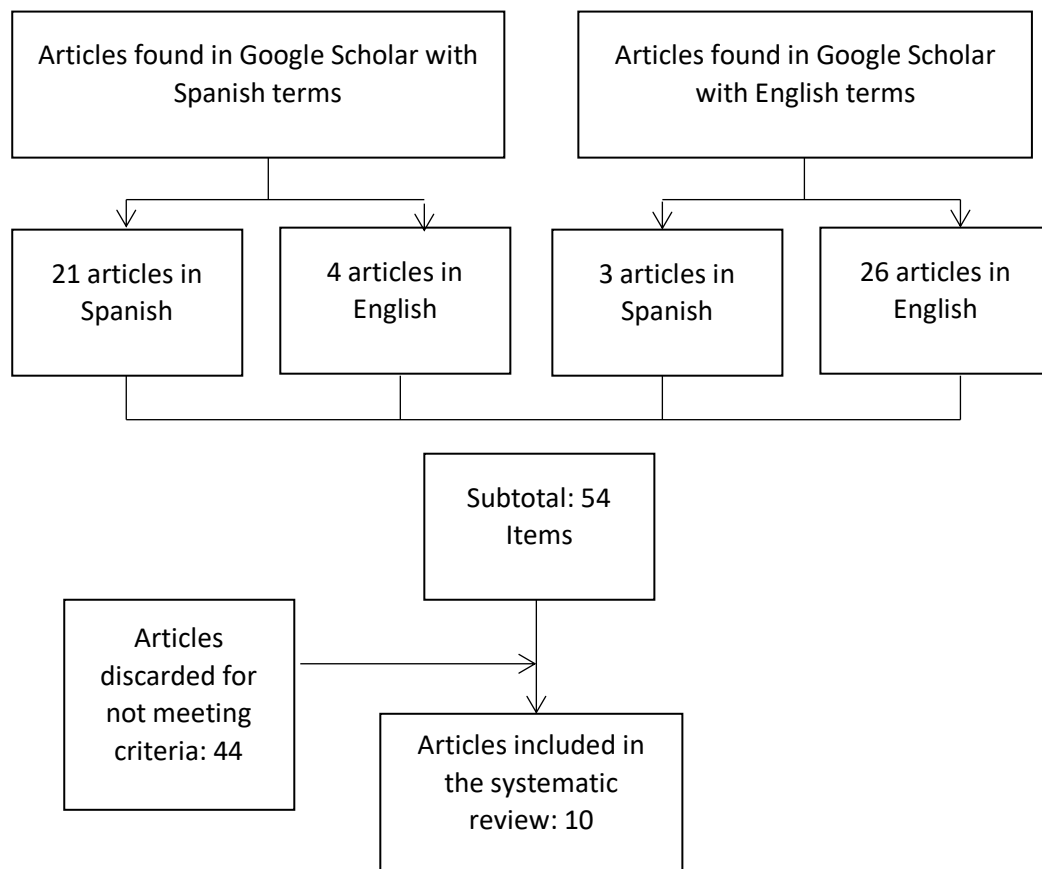


Figure 1. Item selection process

Results

The results are presented considering the categories that allowed the systematic review of each of the selected articles: problem, objective, theories addressed, type and design, participants, techniques and instruments, results.

Studies approach the problem derived from the incidence of Covid-19 in the educational environment from different aspects. One of them is in reference to the emotional state experienced by educational actors, as is the case of managers and teachers who feel exacerbated feelings of immediacy (Fernandez and Shaw, 2020) caused by the need to transform the school and the desire to deal effectively with the new scenario; generating stress and uncertainty (James, 2020) associated with complex states of vulnerability and uncertainty (Villa, 2020). Another aspect has to do with school management that requires new practices on the part of managers,

teachers, students and the family (Hernández, 2020); in the case of managers it is expected that they adapt a new way of managing school policy (Fotheringham, et al., 2020); on the part of teachers, a new pedagogical model that responds to social distancing measures (Oña-Simbañal, 2020; López, 2020); and in the case of parents and students, the development of values and skills that allow them to rebuild post-pandemic coexistence levels (Serey and Zúñiga, 2020). At a more global level, the negative impact of the pandemic on education systems has been evidenced (Sterzer, 2020), widening social gaps (Bonilla, 2020).

Regarding the objectives set out in the studies analyzed, it has been observed that they all focus in some way on leadership (Fotheringham, et al., 2020) or educational management (Hernández, 2020; Oña-Simbañal, 2020) in the Covid-2019 scenario. These are oriented to identify the best leadership practices to face unpredictable challenges (Fernández and Shaw, 2020;), the most mentioned being adaptive leadership (James, 2020) and resilient leadership (Bonilla, 2020); they also propose to study teaching processes (Sterzer, 2020), new pedagogical models (López, 2020), post-pandemic coexistence (Serey and Zúñiga, 2020) and capacities to transform the school in the face of social distancing (Villa, 2020).

Regarding the theories addressed, the most frequent is related to leadership, since Kerr & Jermier's (1978) theory of distributed leadership is mentioned as the one that provides the best results when going through times of crisis such as the current pandemic; since it promotes collaboration and shared and decentralized responsibilities. Heifetz's (1994) theory of adaptive leadership has also been mentioned as it provides capabilities to mobilize, motivate, organize, orient and focus the attention of others and to focus them adaptively towards the same horizon. Various theories have also been addressed to explain school management in environments of change, indicating that in this scenario it is important to configure power (Foucault and Morris, 1979), negotiation, problem solving and anticipation (Braslavsky and Acosta, 2001) and leadership (Murphy and Torre, 2014) to achieve favorable results for the school by pertinently considering the context (Jackson and Andrews, 2000) and the educational system in place (Tam and El-Azar, 2020). It has also been exposed that school culture can become a protective factor in the face of crisis scenarios since they are characterized by a set of shared beliefs and values (Elías, 2015) that can

strengthen post-pandemic school coexistence (Ainscow, 2012) and the levels of attachment that link educational actors under a sense of belonging (Moneta, 2014) and ethical development (Serey, and Zuñiga, 2019).

Almost all the research was conducted under a qualitative approach, using content analysis with bibliographic sources and empirical experience as a method. Only one was of a descriptive quantitative type, considering managers, teachers and students as a sample.

In terms of study results, the role of school leadership in improving the school and educational system in the health context of the Covid-19 pandemic has been emphasized. The following have been identified as best leadership practices: (1) leadership that emphasizes service, which is based on empowerment, participation, collaboration, and emotional intelligence that allows putting the interests of others before one's own; (2) leadership that emphasizes the distribution of leadership responsibilities to improve the quality of decisions made in crisis resolution; (3) leadership that emphasizes communication as this must be clear and frequent with all stakeholders through a variety of communication channels (Fernandez and Shaw, 2020). These characteristics allow for a greater degree of agility, innovation, collaboration, flexibility, adaptability to respond more effectively and efficiently to a crisis, and a sense of anticipation and prevention (Heifetz, 1994; Fernandez and Shaw, 2020; James, 2020; Hernandez, 2020). Resilient leaders capable of promoting the changes and innovations required in the educational environment; adaptable and unafraid to make decisions (Villa, 2020).

In the same way, the ideal conditions for effective school management have been emphasized, evidenced in three aspects: interpersonal, technological resources and pedagogical strategy. Regarding the interpersonal aspect, horizontal communication is one of the main ones (Fotheringham, et al., 2020) followed by socioemotional competencies such as empathy, flexibility and solidarity (Hernández, 2020) that allow addressing the rupture of social relationships and the feeling of attachment due to social distancing (Oña-Simbañal, 2020; Bonilla, 2020); regarding technological resources, it was pointed out that the essential is technological endowment (Oña-Simbañal, 2020), technological infrastructure at home (Sterzer, 2020) and the development of ICT's competencies for teachers and students (Hernández, 2020;

Sterzer, 2020). Regarding the pedagogical aspect, the need to strengthen the competency-based approach in non-face-to-face classes by integrating ICTs in the educational work has been emphasized (López, 2020) without losing sight of the good coexistence practices that are the basis of the future post-Covid-19 citizen. (Serey and Zúñiga, 2020).

Discussion

For (Botero, 2009), educational management implies organization and interaction under a single system of processes, which is in agreement with what is stated by (Unesco, 2000), where it points out that educational management involves policies leading to continuous improvement and innovation (Unesco, 2000) and what is referred to by (Rojas, 2006), according to which educational management implies taking into account the user-centered approach, leadership, participation of educational stakeholders, the process approach and continuous improvement.

As stated by (Bolívar, López & Murillo, 2013) leadership in schools has been described as an individual trait attributed to professionals who perform management functions in the educational context, however, according to (Anderson, 2010) in current times this conception has been expanded to a more shared vision where each educational actor contributes with their particular capabilities to the effective achievement of learning (Anderson, 2010) and as pointed out by (Hallinger & Heck, 2011) when referring that leadership focused on the strengthening of processes in order to generate improvements leading to organizational quality. Heck, 2011) when referring that leadership focused on strengthening processes with a view to generating improvements that lead to organizational quality.

On the other hand (Barber and Mourshed, 2008), with respect to school management, points out that success in this new scenario will be for people and countries that are quick to adapt, moderate their complaints and are open to change. The task of governments will be to ensure that countries take up this challenge, which coincides in part with what was stated by (Fend, 1986, as cited in Rolff, 2012a) where he points out that the main idea is to conceive the school as an autonomous and empowered organization, which learns and innovates with its own resources and is managed in a democratic and participatory manner in this new scenario.

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