

**EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CONTEXTS OF SYSTEMIC DISRUPTION: A CASE STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL ADAPTATION IN A CRISIS SCENARIO**

**LIDERANÇA EDUCACIONAL EM CONTEXTOS DE RUPTURA SISTÊMICA: ESTUDO DE CASO DA ADAPTAÇÃO INSTITUCIONAL EM CENÁRIO DE CRISE**

**LIDERAZGO EDUCATIVO EN CONTEXTOS DE DISRUPCIÓN SISTÉMICA: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO DE ADAPTACIÓN INSTITUCIONAL EN UN ESCENARIO DE CRISIS**



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**ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes educational leadership from a systemic perspective in contexts of organizational disruption, investigating institutional implications of executive decision-making during crisis scenarios. A qualitative interpretive case study is conducted based on institutional documentary evidence, including enrollment evolution, pedagogical strategies, and community engagement actions. The institution operated two school units until July 2022 and expanded to three units thereafter, serving early childhood, elementary, and secondary education. Historical data show growth from 576 enrollments in 2019 to 1,725 in 2026. Findings suggest that technological adaptation, institutional communication, and pedagogical mobilization functioned as drivers of organizational resilience, contributing to institutional stability and community trust.

**Keywords:** Educational Leadership. Case Study. Organizational Resilience. School Management.

**RESUMO**

Este artigo analisa a liderança educacional sob perspectiva sistêmica em contextos de ruptura organizacional, investigando implicações institucionais da tomada de decisão executiva durante cenário de crise. Utiliza-se estudo de caso qualitativo interpretativo baseado em evidências documentais institucionais, incluindo evolução de matrículas, estratégias pedagógicas e ações comunitárias. A instituição operou duas unidades até julho de 2022 e expandiu para três unidades a partir de então, atendendo Educação Infantil, Ensino Fundamental e Ensino Médio. A série histórica demonstra crescimento de 576 matrículas em 2019 para 1.725 em 2026. Argumenta-se que adaptação tecnológica, comunicação institucional e mobilização pedagógica atuaram como vetores de resiliência organizacional, contribuindo para estabilidade institucional e confiança das famílias.

**Palavras-chave:** Liderança Educacional. Estudo de Caso. Resiliência Organizacional. Gestão Escolar.

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## RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza el liderazgo educativo desde una perspectiva sistémica en contextos de disrupción organizacional, investigando las implicaciones institucionales de la toma de decisiones ejecutivas durante un escenario de crisis. Se utiliza un estudio de caso cualitativo interpretativo basado en evidencia documental institucional, que incluye tendencias de matrícula, estrategias pedagógicas y acciones comunitarias. La institución operó dos unidades hasta julio de 2022 y posteriormente se expandió a tres unidades, atendiendo Educación Infantil, Primaria y Bachillerato. La serie histórica muestra un crecimiento de 576 matrículas en 2019 a 1725 en 2026. Se argumenta que la adaptación tecnológica, la comunicación institucional y la movilización pedagógica actuaron como vectores de resiliencia organizacional, contribuyendo a la estabilidad institucional y la confianza familiar.

**Palabras clave:** Liderazgo Educativo. Estudio de Caso. Resiliencia Organizacional. Gestión Escolar.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary educational environments are characterized by organizational complexity and systemic unpredictability, requiring expanded adaptive capacities. In the international debate, studies indicate that school leadership directly influences pedagogical continuity and institutional trust in periods of disruption (Harris; Jones, 2020). In the Brazilian context, school management is often understood as a practice that is inseparable from the pedagogical project and from the concrete conditions of organization of school work (Libâneo, 2004; Paro, 2015), which reinforces the need for situated analysis.

Systemic crises also highlight the role of executive strategic decisions in organizational stability, especially when articulated with institutional culture, team alignment, and the maintenance of ties with families (Fullan, 2014). Thus, this study aims to analyze organizational implications of educational leadership through an institutional case study, relating executive decisions, pedagogical strategies and community bonding actions to observable institutional indicators, with emphasis on the evolution of enrollments over time.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Educational leadership has been associated with institutional performance and organizational adaptability (Leithwood; Harris; Hopkins, 2008). Transformational leadership models emphasize collective mobilization, shared vision, and strengthening professional commitment in contexts of change (Bass; Riggio, 2006).

In Brazil, the literature emphasizes school management as an articulation between pedagogical and administrative dimensions, with attention to the social purpose of the school and the way in which organizational decisions impact teaching work and learning (Libâneo, 2004; Paro, 2015). Saviani (2013), by situating education as a historically constructed social phenomenon, reinforces the importance of understanding leadership as a contextualized practice and not just as a managerial technique detached from concrete conditions.

Organizational culture structures institutional response patterns and influences the consistency of practices and openness to innovation (Schein, 2010; Deal; Peterson, 2009). In addition, organizational resilience is understood as a dynamic capacity for anticipation, coping, and institutional learning in environments of uncertainty (Duchek, 2020).

In the field of educational technology, studies show that technological adoption, by itself, does not guarantee continuity or engagement; institutional support, clarity of guidelines, and the support of pedagogical work are crucial (Bond et al., 2021; Kim; Asbury, 2020). In the Brazilian debate on technological mediation, Kenski (2012) and Moran (2015) emphasize that technologies are means and environments that reconfigure practices, demanding

pedagogical intentionality, training and process management. Thus, systemic leadership can be understood as an integrating axis between strategy, culture and pedagogical practices, favoring adaptive responses and maintaining community trust.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The study is characterized as an interpretative qualitative case study with triangulation of institutional documentary evidence. The following were analyzed: (a) administrative enrollment records (2019–2026); (b) operational descriptions of the pedagogical and technological strategies adopted during a period of crisis; and (c) descriptive records of institutional actions of community engagement.

Until July 2022, the organization operated two educational units (Junior Unit – Early Childhood Education; Unit 1 – Elementary and High School). As of July 2022, with the opening of Unit 2, the data will represent the institutional set of the three units. The analysis used a temporal comparative approach to identify relationships between strategic decisions and observable institutional results, considering the evolution of enrollments as an administrative indicator of institutional stability and trust.

As this is a case study, statistical generalization is not intended. The contribution is located in the analytical-conceptual plane, offering interpretative hypotheses and implications for educational management in contexts of rupture. As an analytical procedure, the evidence was organized into axes: (1) pedagogical continuity; (2) technological adaptation; (3) school-family bond; and (4) mobilization of the pedagogical team.

### 4 RESULTS

Institutional data indicate a trajectory of continuous growth in enrollments between 2019 and 2026. At the same time, strategies for pedagogical continuity and strengthening of community bonds were adopted, including: synchronous classes via Zoom; availability of weekly pedagogical scripts with links to classes and complementary resources; periodic meetings with families by class; and the institutional event "Sempre Juntos" (July/2020), with online actions and delivery of materials via drive-thru to reinforce belonging and institutional presence.

**Table 1**

*Evolution of institutional enrollments (2019–2026)*

Year	Enrollment
2019	576
2020	692
2021	704
2022	986
2023	1292
2024	1472
2025	1610
2026	1725

Source: Authors.

There is an increase from 576 enrollments (2019) to 692 (2020) and 704 (2021). In 2022, with the opening of Unit 2 in July, the institutional total increased to 986 enrollments. The trend continues in 2023 (1,292), 2024 (1,472), 2025 (1,610) and 2026 (1,725), suggesting sustained expansion and maintenance of institutional confidence throughout the post-crisis period.

## 5 ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

The results allow interpretation beyond empirical description. The trajectory of institutional growth suggests that systemic leadership acted as a mediating mechanism between technological adaptation, pedagogical consistency, and organizational cohesion. Such a reading dialogues with conceptions of strategic leadership and institutional continuity (Fullan, 2014) and with resilience approaches such as dynamic learning capacity and organizational recomposition (Duchek, 2020).

On the pedagogical-operational level, the adoption of synchronous classes via Zoom, associated with the prior availability of weekly scripts with links and complementary resources, increased predictability and clarity for families and students. This aligns with the argument that the quality of the remote transition depends on institutional coordination, support, and pedagogical design — and not just the technological tool (Bond et al., 2021; Kim; Asbury, 2020). In the Brazilian debate, Kenski (2012) and Moran (2015) reinforce that technologies, when integrated with pedagogical intentionality and process management, can expand possibilities of mediation, engagement and communication.

In addition, the close and continuous performance of the executive management played a relevant role in motivating and aligning the pedagogical team. Frequent communication, clarity in guidelines, and operational support contributed to strengthening professional engagement and a sense of belonging, which is consistent with evidence on transformational leadership and faculty commitment (Bass; Riggio, 2006). In the national literature on school management, the centrality of the organization of work and support to the

teams appears as a structuring dimension of institutional quality, by articulating planning, coordination and pedagogical monitoring (Libâneo, 2004; Luck, 2009).

The institutional event "Always Together" (July/2020), with online and drive-thru actions for the delivery of materials, can be interpreted as a strategy to maintain symbolic presence and community bonding. In contexts of uncertainty, institutional trust tends to depend not only on pedagogical deliveries, but on consistent signals of care, predictability, and organizational commitment (Weick; Sutcliffe, 2007). Thus, the findings suggest that trust is not established only by technological means, but by integration between culture, communication and collective mobilization — a dimension consistent with the understanding of the school as a social institution with responsibilities beyond curricular fulfillment (Saviani, 2013; Paro, 2015).

## **6 LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

As this is a case study based on documentary data and institutional descriptions, the results are not generalizable. Future research may explore comparative designs with other institutions and incorporate systematic instruments of perception of families and teachers (e.g., questionnaires and interviews) for expanded triangulation. It is also recommended to deepen the analysis of pedagogical indicators (learning, attendance and participation) to increase inferential robustness.

Even so, the study offers an analytical contribution by showing how leadership, organizational culture, and community bond management can operate as vectors of resilience in disruptive contexts. For school managers, the findings suggest: (a) centrality of clear and frequent communication; (b) structured pedagogical planning with predictability; (c) active support to teams; and (d) initiatives to bond with families that sustain belonging and trust.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

The study shows that educational executive leadership influences processes of institutional resilience and pedagogical continuity in scenarios of systemic disruption. The integration between organizational strategy, pedagogical mobilization and technological adaptation contributed to institutional stability and sustained growth in enrollments in the period analyzed. Although limited to the case study, the findings reinforce the relevance of systemic approaches to educational management to sustain trust and continuity in environments of high uncertainty.

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