

2020

Beginning Principals:

Challenges faced by new principals in São Paulo

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Motivation

Motivation and Context

Research Question and Objectives



The research aimed at understanding the challenges faced by beginning principals in São Paulo.

Internationally, an important research field, not yet developed in Brazil.

Three specific objectives:

- How does the socialization process work for beginning principals in São Paulo?
- What kind of support is given by the public administration to beginning principals?
- What are the main formative necessities?

Research was developed with SP Department of Education's and the Principal's Union support. They helped to disseminate the research and we presented the results for them, at FGV.



Literature Review

Field Contextualization



Principals are the second most important intra-school factor for student performance (García-Garduño et al, 2011b; Leithwood and Riehl, 2005; Leithwood et al, 2004; Robinson, 2008; Seashore Louis et al, 2010; Spillane and Lee, 2014; Torrecilla and Carrasco, 2013).

1970: First studies regarding principals' role (Greenfield, 1977a, 1977b)

1980/1990: First studies regarding beginning principals. First two years appear in the literature as being the most difficult and, therefore, deserve to be highlighted.

Since 2000: expansion of the findings to non-Anglo-Saxon countries, broadening/increasing the debate.

In Brazil, no study has yet been produced on this topic.

Similar findings....



Studies about beginning principals have encountered similar problems in all countries analyzed.

Problems common to new principals (García-Garduño et al, 2011a; Hobson et al, 2003; Spillane and Lee, 2014; Weinstein et al , 2016):

- Traumatic experience
- Little anticipation of problems
- Multiple demands
- Loneliness and isolation
- Legacy of the previous director and pre-established culture
- Time management, volume and diversity of tasks
- Resistant and often inefficient teams.

Studies of novice principals in non-Anglo-Saxon countries:

- Conflict resolution between students and teachers, the shortage of staff, lack of resources, among others.

... but different solutions



What differentiates them are the strategies implemented by governmental actors for this transition.

New principals need specific support strategies (Weinstein et al, 2016) and the conditions of this transition are what will guarantee a reduction or expansion of the problems encountered (Spillane and Lee, 2014).

Most countries, however, do not have formal principal training programs.

One example:

- Evolve: New principals (Victoria, Australia)
8 month program (workshops, mentoring and self-directed learning)

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Methodology

Triangulation process



Instruments were the same used in Chile, adapted to the Brazilian context.



3 case studies



Questionnaires sent to 215 new principals.

76 answers



Comparison of the answers and analysis of the main findings.

Case selection

Criteria for selecting the case studies



- ✓ Previous Experience: no previous experience in management roles;
- ✓ Location
- ✓ Gender
- ✓ School results: IDEP (Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Paulista).

| | Gender | Modality | IDEP | Region |
|---------------|--------|--------------------------|------|------------|
| Case 1 | Male | Primary Ed | 5 | Zona Oeste |
| Case 2 | Female | Primary and Secondary Ed | 2 | Zona Sul |
| Case 3 | Female | Early Childhood Ed | n/a | Zona Leste |



Research Context

Principal Selection



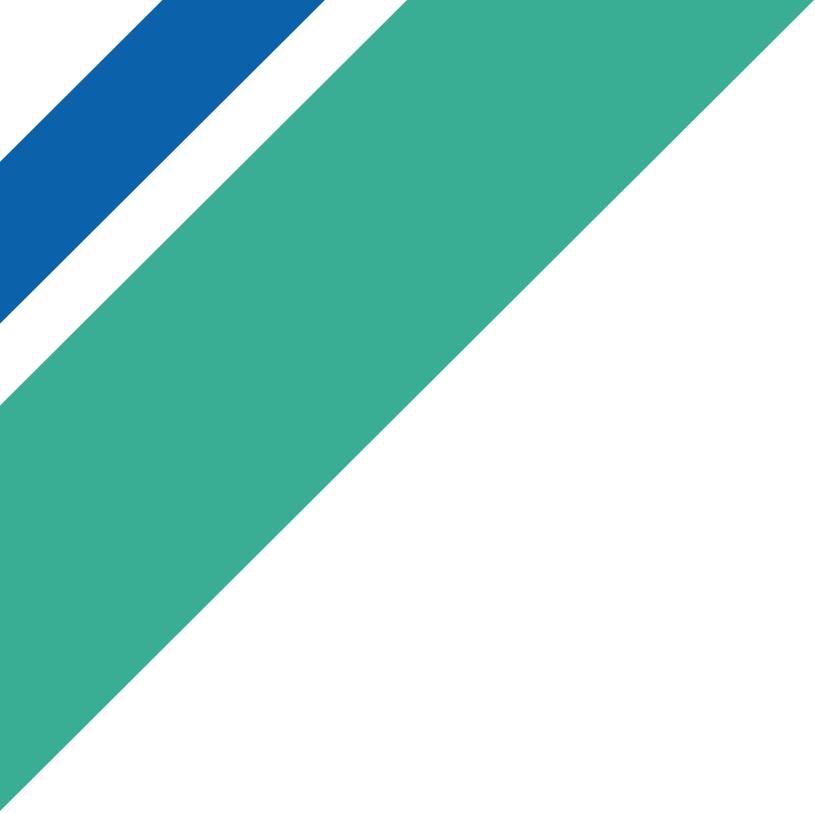
In Brazil, 96% of principal's selection are made through appointment (mainly political indication or election).

Only 4% of the municipalities do what is called a "concurso público" (public tender).

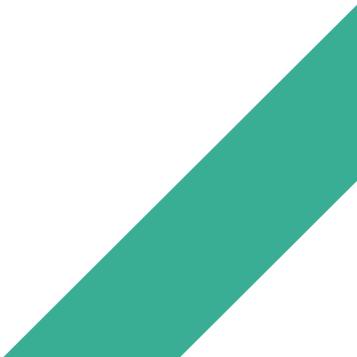
In São Paulo: the last *concurso* was in 2015. The municipality can still appoint the principals that were approved in this *concurso*.

1st: 10/2016
 2nd: 11/2016
 3rd: 08/2017
 4th: 12/2017
 5th: 01/2018

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 6th: 01/2019 | In 2019, 215 new principals were nominated. |
| 7th: 01/2019 | |
| 8th: 03/2019 | |
| 9th: 06/2019 | |



Results



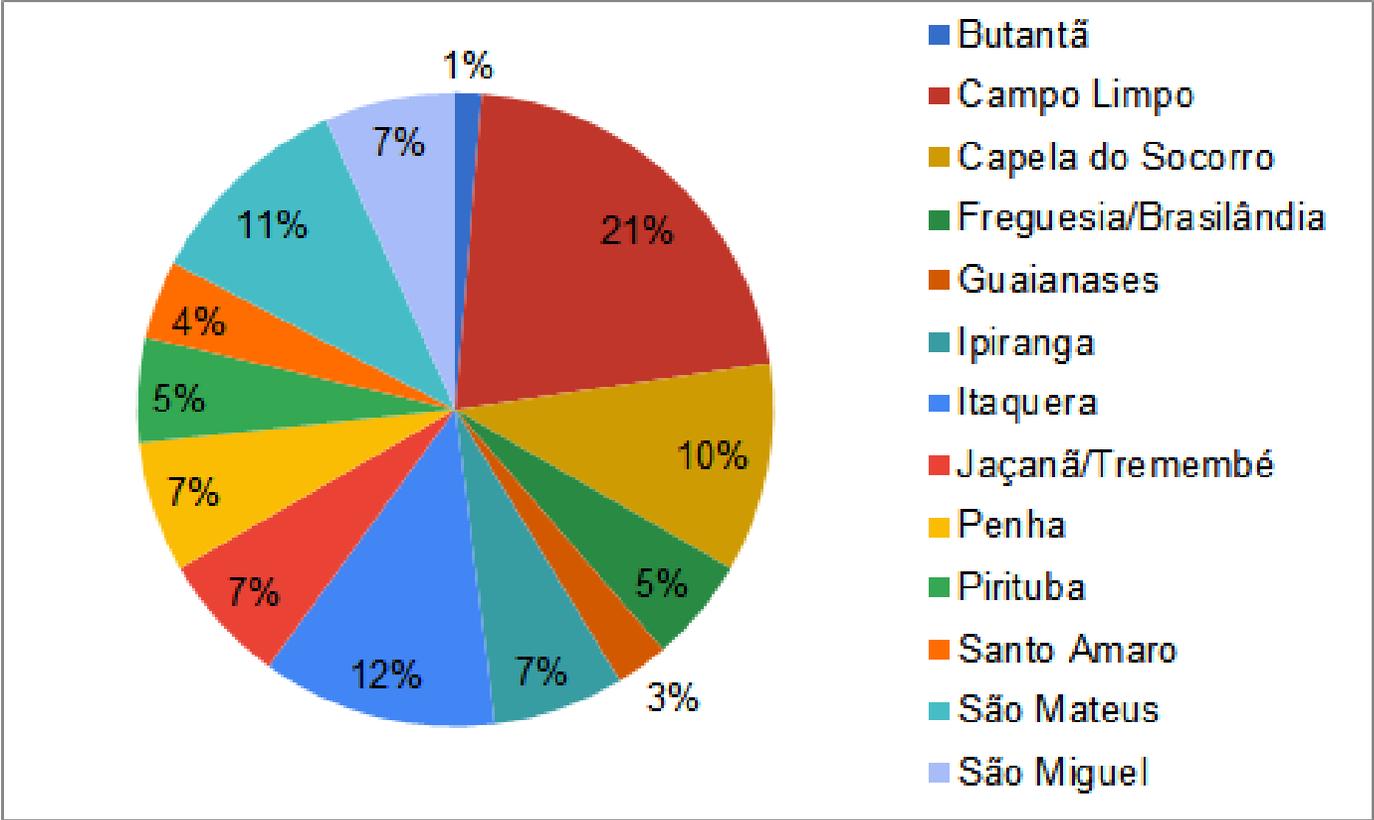
Location

Regional Department of Education



The Municipal Department of Education has 13 regional departments (DRES).

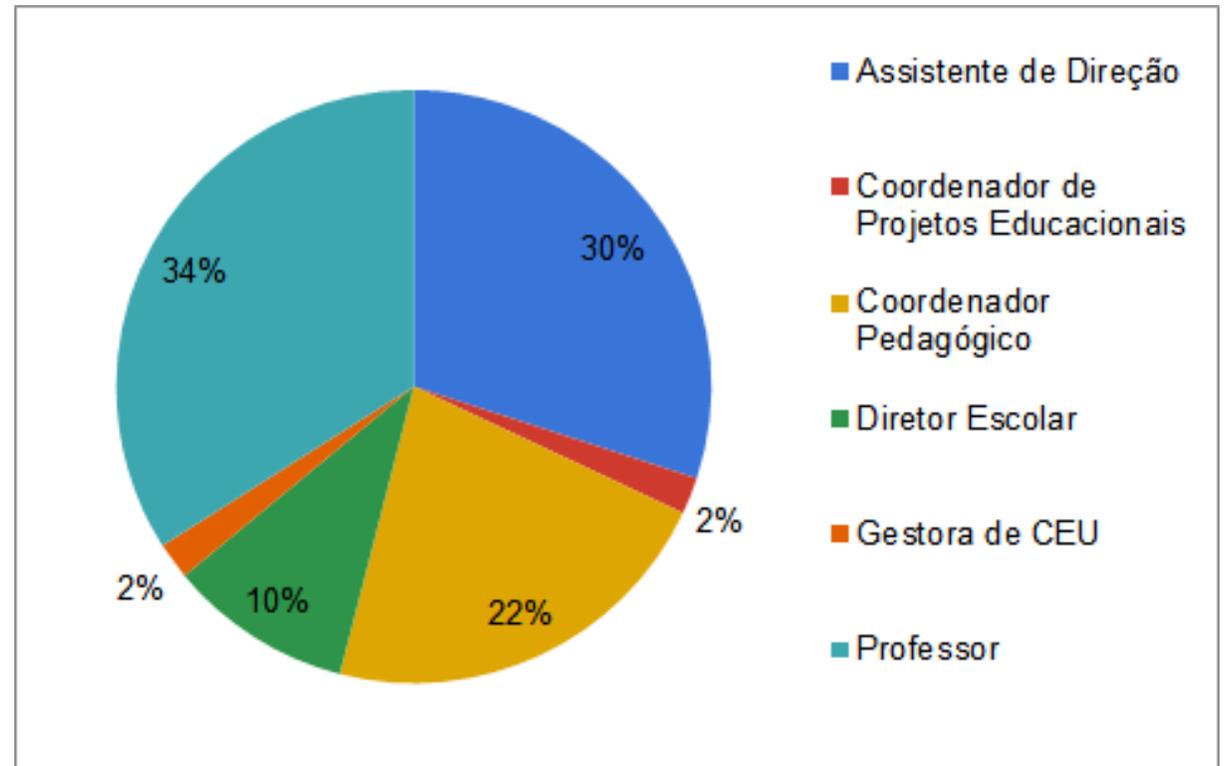
The respondents covered all the DRES.



Previous Experience



66% of principals had previous experience in management roles, especially as principals' assistants.



Education & Training



Among principals with previous experience, 48% had specialization in school management or school leadership.

Among principals without previous experience, 42% of them had done such specializations.

After the nomination, 44% of them participated in training courses.

- Union: 40% of the new principals took the training offered by the principals' union;
- Among 13 DREs, only 4 offered training;
- No training offered by the Municipal Department of Education.

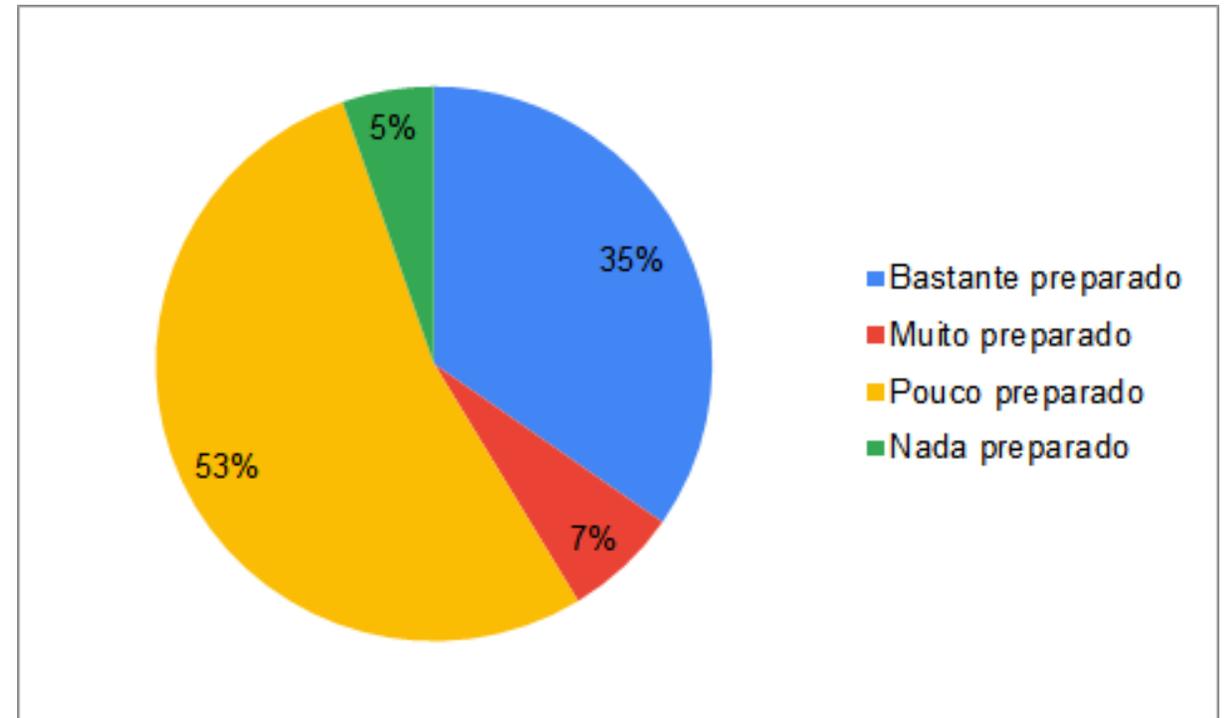
Education & Training



58% declared being not prepared at all or weakly prepared.

42% declared feeling adequately or well prepared:

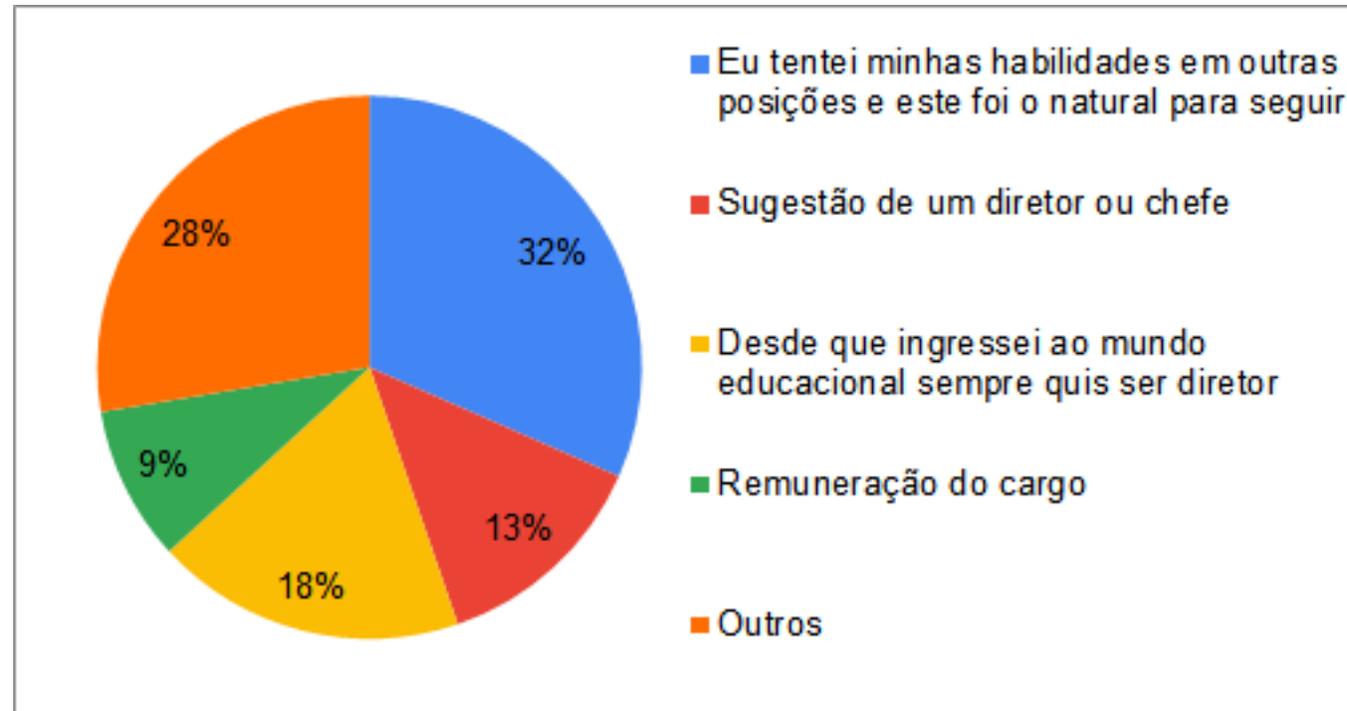
- 77,4% had previous experience in management roles;
- 41,9% had taken specialization courses;
- 64,5% hadn't taken any training after being nominated.
- 28,5% are male (compared to 20% of males in the total sample).



Influences



What made you decide to become a principal?



Influences



The influence by other principals, when they were teachers, was described as essential to their formation (in a positive or negative way).

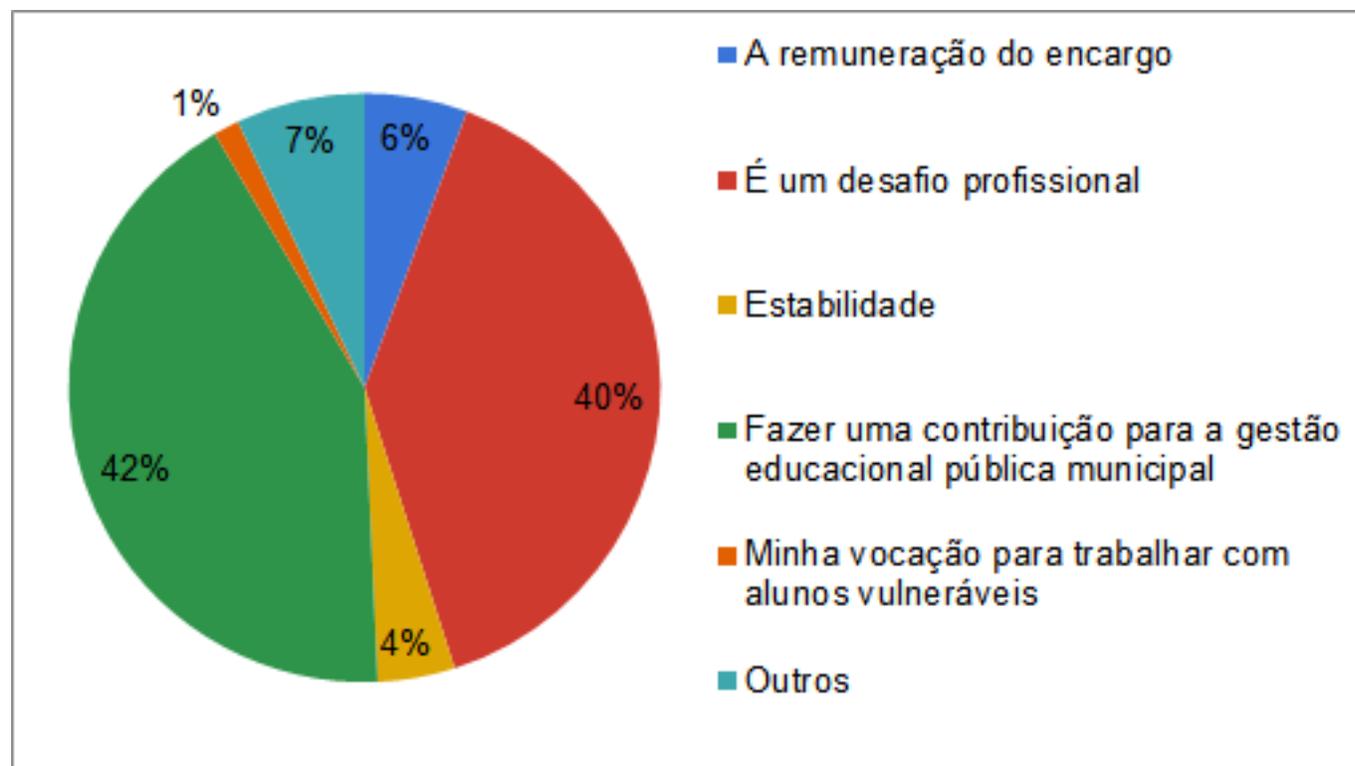
“Two principals had deeply disappointed me; they inspired me to do things differently” (02)

“There wasn’t someone in special, but a composition of many principals. I remember the ones that had a human perspective and were able to create a good school climate” (03)

Motivation



What was your main motivation to become a principal?



Motivation



The case studies showed that salary was a very important point when deciding to become a principal. As a teacher, many of them decided to become a principal just based on the salary:

“It was a life choice [life style]” (01)

One said that there was a choice to leave the classroom:

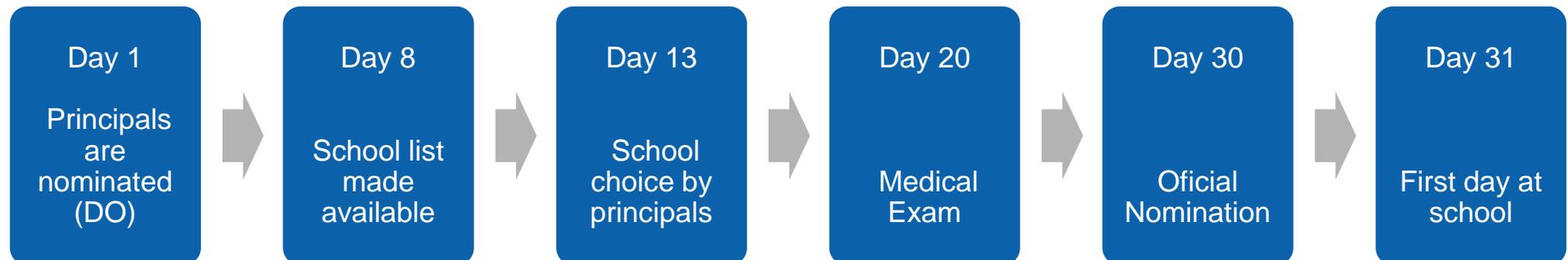
“I wanted to know the whole school. In the classroom we stay very isolated” (03)

First Days

The cases revealed that most of the principals only get to know the school in their first day at work.

There is no information available for them when they have to choose the school where they will work.

The main reason to choose a school: location



First Days



One of the principals revealed that she had never worked with early childhood education before. She did not know the processes and the work dynamics. Now she is the principal in one of these establishments.

Another principal revealed that the school is too big and she is not able to deal with all its complexity. She thinks they should start in a smaller school.

“The school was on strike during my first day. There were very few teachers. The community wanted some explanation. I was a new principal. I had to bring all of them to dialogue” (02)

First Days



The first 15 days were the most stressful ones. Principals had to do an overwhelming amount of bureaucratic activities regarding the transition.

After this period, they revealed feeling lonely, abandoned and isolated.

One of the principals said to be facing panic syndrome.

One of the principals said that many of the beginning principals regret having made this decision.

“It is not difficult, but it is frenetic. We cannot rest, not even for one minute. There are many things to do. It is overwhelming” (03)

First Year



87% described their first year as a hard or very hard experience.

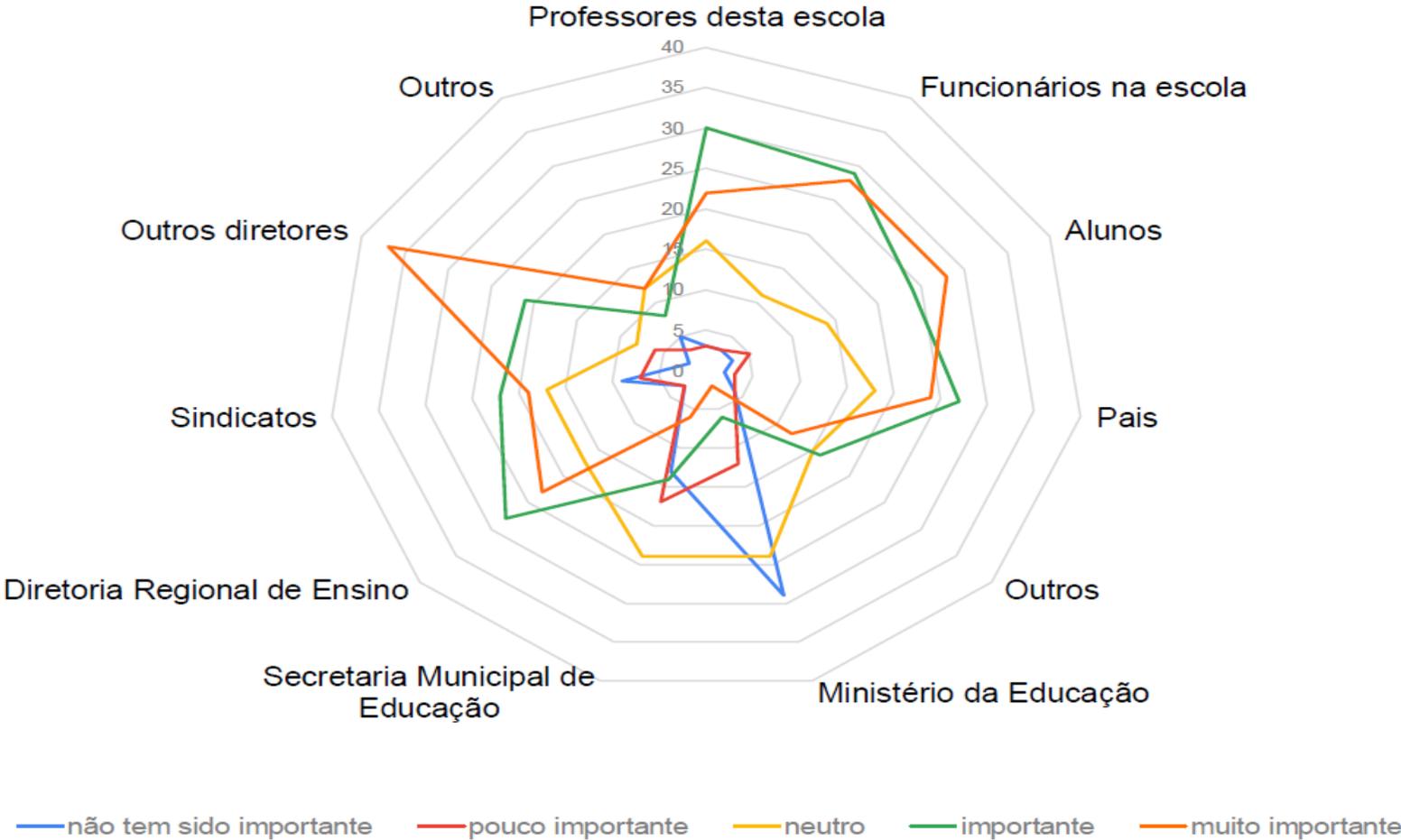
Regarding the main challenges, they listed:

- Personal relations and difficulty to become a leader;
- Dealing with teachers (absenteeism, older and more experienced teachers);
- Lack of staff and technical expertise;
- Amount of bureaucratic activities to do;
- School culture (distrust, resistance to change).

First Year



Who gave you the most important support during the first year?



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Discussion and Next Steps

Main Challenges



Problems and challenges are the same around the world, in developed and developing countries.

In Brazil, the research confirms what was seen in other studies, especially:

- The many demands faced by beginning principals;
- Feelings of abandonment and isolation;
- Dealing with the school culture and the resistance to change;
- Time management (variety and volume of tasks);
- Dealing with a resistant team – and with many of them lacking technical skills;

How governments are dealing with it

If the challenges are the same, the strategies to overcome them differentiates the countries.

One of the most successful strategies relates to principal training programs, which are able to prepare beginning principals for this new challenge.

- Practical experience is a key point in the successful programs.
- Training should focus on technical, personal and social abilities, as pointed by the principals.

There are, however, more complex issues that could not be solved through induction programs, such as teacher absenteeism and teacher motivation.

Next steps



Compare our main findings with the Chilean experience.

Analyze the key characteristics of successful programs and understand how we could adapt them to Brazil.

Present the results in other arenas:

- ✓ Event (Nov/2019) at FGV
 - ✓ CONSED (GT Gestão Escolar)
 - ✓ State Department of Education of Tocantins, São Paulo and Mato Grosso
 - ✓ Municipal Department of Education (SP)
 - ✓ UNESCO
 - ✓ NGOs (Instituto Unibanco, Fundação Lemann, Fundação Itau Social, British Council)
 - ✓ Principal's Union.

School leadership is not yet in the governmental agenda.



Thank you!

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