REVISTA TÓPICOS
ISSN 2965-6672 | Qualis A2

INNOVATIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN PROMOTING LEARNING AND TRANSFORMING EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

GESTÃO ESCOLAR INOVADORA: O PAPEL DA LIDERANÇA NA PROMOÇÃO DA APRENDIZAGEM E NA TRANSFORMAÇÃO DAS PRÁTICAS EDUCATIVAS

Ciências Humanas, Ciências Sociais Aplicadas • 26/11/2026

REGISTRO DOI: 10.70773/revistatopicos/795577656

Alexandre Vidal de Sousa[1]

Christianne de Paula Cavalcante Pearce[2]

Danielle Taumaturgo Dias Soares[3]

Dionys Morais dos Santos[4]

Fernanda Maria Diniz da Silva[5]

Filipe Eugênio Rodrigues Silvestre[6]

Francisca de Fátima Matias Pedrosa[7]

Irene Mendes Fontes[8]

José Maria Campos de Oliveira Neto[9]

Larissa Nascimento de Oliveira[10]

Rene de Aquino Rodrigues[11]

Rickardo Léo Ramos Gomes[12]

Thaís Ferreira Barros[13]

ABSTRACT

Innovative school management is relevant to this study because it can transform educational practices and improve learning, particularly in response to contemporary educational demands. Without conducting direct observations in schools, this study examined the role of leadership in this process, including its contributions to transforming educational practices and promoting student learning. A qualitative approach was adopted, with a basic research design and exploratory and descriptive objectives, supported by bibliographic and documentary procedures. The search prioritized national and international publications from 2018 to 2026, identified through descriptors in Portuguese and English and retrieved from academic databases and repositories. The selection criteria combined thematic relevance and scientific quality. The corpus was organized into four thematic areas: school management and leadership; pedagogical innovation; play-based learning and educational games; and pedagogical monitoring and assessment. Exploratory, selective, and interpretive readings made it possible to identify contributions and areas of convergence while also acknowledging the limitations of the literature. The studies analyzed indicate that innovative leadership brings together participatory planning, teacher professional development, professional collaboration, pedagogical innovation, and the assessment of educational processes. Play-based activities and games, in turn, can be incorporated into intentional educational practices, provided that they involve pedagogical mediation and assessment of their outcomes. This analysis leads to the study's central conclusion: innovative school management is an integrated institutional process, and its implementation requires leadership, pedagogical organization, and assessment to operate in a coordinated manner. As the review itself makes clear, empirical

research investigating this relationship across different school contexts remains lacking, an issue that this type of bibliographic and documentary study was not designed to address.
Keywords: School management; Educational leadership; Pedagogical innovation; Learning.

RESUMO

A gestão escolar inovadora interessa a este estudo porque pode transformar práticas educativas e melhorar a aprendizagem, sobretudo diante das demandas contemporâneas da educação. Sem observar escolas diretamente, o trabalho examinou o papel da liderança nesse processo, inclusive suas contribuições para transformar o fazer educativo e favorecer a aprendizagem dos estudantes. Adotou uma abordagem qualitativa, de natureza básica, com objetivos exploratórios e descritivos, apoiada em procedimentos bibliográficos e documentais. A busca priorizou publicações de 2018 a 2026, nacionais e internacionais, localizadas por descritores em português e em inglês, consultados em bases acadêmicas e repositórios, e o critério de seleção combinou pertinência temática e qualidade científica. O corpus foi distribuído em gestão escolar e liderança, inovação pedagógica, ludicidade e jogos voltados à aprendizagem, e acompanhamento pedagógico e avaliação. As leituras exploratória, seletiva e interpretativa permitiram reconhecer contribuições e convergências, sem deixar de registrar as limitações da literatura. Nos trabalhos analisados, a liderança inovadora articula planejamento participativo, formação docente, colaboração profissional, inovação pedagógica e avaliação dos processos educativos. O uso da ludicidade e de jogos, por sua vez, pode integrar práticas educativas intencionais, desde que haja mediação pedagógica e acompanhamento avaliativo do que produzem. Dessa leitura resulta a conclusão central do trabalho: a

gestão escolar inovadora é um processo institucional integrado, e pô-la em prática exige que liderança, organização pedagógica e avaliação trabalhem articuladamente. Falta, como o próprio levantamento deixa claro, pesquisa empírica que investigue essa articulação em diferentes contextos escolares, o que este tipo de estudo, bibliográfico e documental, não tinha como oferecer.

Palavras-chave: Gestão escolar; Liderança educacional; Inovação pedagógica; Aprendizagem.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social, cultural, and technological transformations reach schools accompanied by demands that cannot be addressed through the administration of routine activities alone. Improving teaching and learning, promoting inclusion, encouraging community participation, and reviewing pedagogical practices are often necessary simultaneously. In this context, discussing innovative school management means addressing an approach that goes beyond the administrative dimension. It involves organizing institutional processes, mobilizing professionals, and creating conditions for schools to develop educational experiences suited to their students' needs and conducive to improved learning. Educational leadership operates at this intersection, which is not always stable, between the objectives established by the institution and what actually takes place in everyday school life.

These changes also affect the organization of pedagogical work, teachers' instructional practices, and the ways in which administrators, teachers, students, and the community interact. Incorporating educational technologies, encouraging teacher professional development, fostering collaboration among

professionals, and diversifying teaching strategies are all part of this process and must be continuously reinforced. The use of play-based approaches, student agency, and educational games can expand student participation and interaction, but these outcomes are not guaranteed. Such practices must have clear pedagogical purposes and be aligned with official curricular objectives. School leadership is responsible for reconciling the appreciation of these practices with the monitoring of educational processes, while remaining attentive to differences among students and to the institutional conditions of each school.

In this context, the following research question was established: **How can leadership in school management promote institutional and pedagogical innovation processes capable of transforming educational practices and fostering student learning?** To address this question, the general objective was defined as **analyzing the role of leadership in innovative school management, considering its contributions to transforming educational practices and promoting student learning.** The specific objectives were as follows: to investigate the foundations of innovative school management and the characteristics of educational leadership, considering its influence on institutional organization and the development of a school culture oriented toward innovation; to examine leadership and management strategies aimed at encouraging pedagogical innovation, collaboration among education professionals, and the transformation of teaching and learning practices; and to analyze the contributions and challenges of school leadership in promoting student learning, considering teacher professional development, the use of educational technologies, pedagogical monitoring, and the assessment of educational processes.

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative study was conducted, with a basic research design and exploratory and descriptive objectives, based on bibliographic and documentary procedures. National and international publications were examined, with priority given to works published between 2018 and 2026 and selected according to criteria of thematic relevance and scientific quality. The search used descriptors in Portuguese and English across academic databases and repositories. Subsequently, the materials were organized into three analytical areas: the foundations of school management and leadership; pedagogical innovation strategies, with particular attention to play-based approaches and educational games in learning; and the relationships among leadership, pedagogical monitoring, and assessment. The interpretation was based on exploratory, selective, and interpretive readings aimed at identifying contributions, areas of convergence, and limitations in the literature examined.

After this introduction, three sections complete the article. The second develops the theoretical framework in three subsections, bringing together four thematic areas: the management and leadership of schools, innovation in pedagogical practice, learning through play and educational games, and pedagogical monitoring and assessment. Its discussion examines the bases of innovative school management, leadership strategies that support pedagogical innovation, and the connections among leadership, monitoring, assessment and the promotion of learning. The third section describes the methodological procedures adopted in the investigation. The fourth presents the concluding remarks, returning to the objectives and principal arguments developed in the study, considering its contributions and indicating possible directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Innovative School Management And Educational Leadership: Foundations And The Development Of An Institutional Culture Of Innovation

Innovative school management is not limited to managing resources, signing documents, implementing procedures, and complying with regulatory requirements, although these dimensions do exist and must function properly. What distinguishes it is leadership understood as the process of bringing institutional decisions, professional relationships, and pedagogical practices together within a common framework. The school principal is responsible for mobilizing the entire school community around educational objectives that are genuinely shared and pursued through joint decision-making. According to Lück (2014), leadership in school management involves guiding and integrating education professionals, mobilizing them to achieve institutional objectives. This understanding moves innovation beyond the exclusive domain of technologies and new methodologies: it also requires organizational working conditions that enable professionals to participate, assume shared responsibilities, and continuously review their practices.

Consolidating school management oriented toward innovation also depends on coherence between the decisions made by school leadership and the actual conditions under which the school operates on a daily basis. Lück (2014) helps explain that leadership is not limited to establishing objectives or distributing responsibilities, as it requires the various components of the school organization to function in alignment with its educational purposes. This has a

practical implication: the priorities established by school management must be compatible with available resources, the organization of institutional schedules, and the working conditions of education professionals. When school leaders take these dimensions into account in their decision-making, institutional changes are more likely to be sustained over time and become less dependent on individual commitment or occasional decisions made by the school principal.

Democratic, participatory, and transformational perspectives are among the different conceptions of educational leadership. Although each has its own characteristics, they converge in emphasizing collective mobilization, shared responsibilities, and the establishment of common objectives. Under the democratic perspective, decisions are made through dialogue and the participation of different segments of the school community. The participatory perspective focuses primarily on ensuring that professionals take part in decision-making processes. Transformational leadership, in turn, emphasizes the ability to stimulate change, mobilize commitment, and develop an institutional vision that everyone recognizes as their own. By relating leadership to its influence on collective work and the creation of an environment conducive to the development of school organizations, Lück (2014) connects these perspectives to the discussion of innovation.

The development of an institutional culture of innovation therefore depends on leadership capable of building trust among professionals, fostering collaboration and participation in decision-making, and creating opportunities within the school for knowledge

and experiences to be shared. Weinstein and Simielli (2022, p. 09) state that:

> *School leadership has increasingly been recognized as a powerful transformative force in the quality of education. Its impact is based on the ability of school stakeholders, particularly principals, to positively influence the collective work carried out daily in Basic Education to educate new generations. School principals' leadership is expressed in different ways, ranging from the pursuit of an educational project that inspires and motivates the school community to providing appropriate support to achieve higher-quality teaching in classrooms, as well as successfully organizing collective teacher work structures and encouraging the general participation of different stakeholders in school life.*

This understanding demonstrates that innovative leadership takes shape both in the institution's strategic direction and in the monitoring of pedagogical activities and the promotion of collective participation throughout the school community. Oliveira and Carvalho (2018) address this relationship by investigating, in the Brazilian context, how school management and the leadership exercised by principals are associated with educational outcomes. This perspective makes it possible to understand that the work of school principals is connected to school operations and pedagogical organization, particularly when it involves monitoring teaching activities, coordinating institutional actions, providing appropriate teaching conditions, and bringing different professionals together.

In line with this discussion, Tan, Dimmock, and Walker (2024, p. 14) state that their research found: “Significant associations between

school leadership practices and different student learning outcomes provide empirical support for the argument that school leadership contributes to student learning." Thus, leadership should be understood as a dimension that can foster learning by organizing institutional conditions and guiding educational practices.

The development of an institutional culture of innovation also depends on the school's ability to transform isolated initiatives into processes that become part of its everyday organizational practices. Weinstein and Simielli (2022) contribute to this discussion by situating leadership within the actions that shape the daily work of Basic Education institutions. If leadership operates at this level, institutionalizing innovation means incorporating it into the school's existing planning, organizational, and monitoring procedures rather than treating it as an activity disconnected from these processes. This requires documenting experiences, systematizing the knowledge generated by education professionals in their daily work, and creating opportunities for successful practices to be collectively examined and improved. This approach offers two benefits: it preserves organizational learning and reduces dependence on specific individuals, ensuring that the departure of a principal or teacher does not result in the loss of the knowledge and practices developed within the institution.

Discussing school management in Brazil requires revisiting the historical changes experienced by educational institutions, since administration, organization, and leadership have not always been understood in the same way. Simielli, Oliveira, and Carvalho (2026) examine the historical development of school management in Brazil and discuss its future prospects, making it possible to situate the challenges involved in updating management models and the

institutional responses required by contemporary educational demands. From another perspective, Nascente and Carvalho (2026) present the process of developing, testing, and validating an instrument to study school leadership in Brazil, contributing to the identification and examination of its characteristics within the educational context. Taken together, these studies support the view that management innovation requires context-specific knowledge of leadership practices, as well as research and assessment tools capable of examining them.

Institutional functioning also generates information that must be considered when examining innovative school management. By investigating the relationships among school management, principals' leadership, and educational outcomes in Brazil, Oliveira and Carvalho (2018) provide insights into the effects of administrative and pedagogical decisions. When the objective is to analyze innovative management, monitoring should not be restricted to verifying task completion or observing formal procedures, as these aspects capture only a limited dimension of what school management actually does. Attention should also be given to how teaching is organized, how pedagogical activities are conducted, and the conditions provided for students. When examined in relation to the objectives established in institutional planning, the observed results can indicate the need to review institutional priorities and support more consistent decision-making, rather than reducing management assessment to bureaucratic control over the execution of activities.

Institutional transformations do not occur all at once. School management must therefore recognize that innovation is a gradual process and that its effects do not necessarily emerge at the same

pace as the decisions that initiate it. This consideration is consistent with the work of Tan, Dimmock, and Walker (2024), who examine the associations between school leadership practices and different learning outcomes, helping to explain why these relationships must be analyzed without overlooking the complexity of educational contexts. This understanding suggests that the assessment of management initiatives should encompass different stages of implementation, since progress, limitations, and aspects requiring revision become evident throughout this process.

Such monitoring supports evidence-informed decisions and prevents the speed of implementation or the visibility of initial results from becoming the sole criteria for evaluating institutional change. An institutional culture of innovation becomes stronger when the assessment and review of the school's own decisions cease to be occasional measures and become an integral part of its ongoing development.

The following table summarizes the main dimensions of educational leadership and their relationships with institutional organization, professional collaboration, innovation, and student learning, drawing on the contributions of the selected authors.

Table 1. Dimensions of Educational Leadership in the Development of Innovative School Management

Analytical dimension	**Characteristics and contributions to innovative school management**	**Author and abbreviated title of the work**
Leadership and institutional mobilization	Guiding teams, coordinating collective actions, and mobilizing professionals	Lück (2014). *Leadership in School Management*.

	around educational objectives.	
Democratic leadership and participation	Valuing the participation of different school stakeholders, collective work, and the development of shared educational projects.	Weinstein and Simielli (2022). *School Leadership*.
Leadership and educational outcomes	Relationship between principals' actions, the organization of school management, and educational outcomes.	Oliveira and Carvalho (2018). *School Management, Leadership, and Outcomes*.
Leadership and student learning	Association between school leadership practices and different student learning outcomes.	Tan, Dimmock, and Walker (2024). *Leadership Practices and Learning Outcomes*.
School management and institutional transformation	Understanding the historical development of school management in Brazil and discussing perspectives for its transformation.	Simielli, Oliveira, and Carvalho (2026). *School Management in Brazil*.
Characterization and assessment of leadership	Development, testing, and validation of an instrument designed to investigate school leadership in Brazil.	Nascente and Carvalho (2026). *School Leadership in Brazil*.

Source: Prepared by the author (2026), based on Lück (2014), Oliveira and Carvalho (2018), Weinstein and Simielli (2022), Tan, Dimmock, and Walker (2024), Simielli, Oliveira, and Carvalho (2026), and Nascente and Carvalho (2026).

From this perspective, innovative school management constitutes an institutional process that brings together a commitment to learning, the democratic participation of the school community, and

professional collaboration, alongside leadership and change management. For this process to become established, it must translate collective objectives into pedagogical and organizational practices, creating conditions for teachers and other professionals to participate from the design of educational initiatives through their implementation and assessment. The principal retains their role, but leadership is distributed among different stakeholders who share responsibility for institutional development. These dimensions are summarized in Table 1, which also identifies how the authors cited contribute to understanding the foundations of educational leadership and the development of a school culture oriented toward innovation.

2.2. School Leadership And Pedagogical Innovation: Strategies For Transforming Educational Practices

Pedagogical innovation requires more than introducing different activities into the classroom. In school management, it calls for coordination among leadership, institutional planning, and the reorganization of teaching and learning processes, as well as strategies that encourage teachers to participate, exchange experiences, and experiment with different educational practices. Within this context, play-based resources and games emerge as methodological possibilities capable of increasing student engagement, encouraging student agency, and diversifying instructional activities. The most immediate risk is that these practices become part of everyday school life as isolated activities, disconnected from curriculum planning and the intended learning objectives. To prevent this, pedagogical intentionality is required, along with management oversight through pedagogical meetings involving teachers from different subject areas.

When addressing the development of competencies and skills, the Brazilian National Common Curricular Base (Base Nacional Comum Curricular, BNCC) connects knowledge with communication, critical thinking, digital culture, and active student participation (Brasil, 2018). This framework provides a foundation for pedagogical innovation strategies that emphasize problem-solving, interaction, and the collaborative construction of knowledge. To translate these strategies into practice, school leadership can organize collective planning sessions and continuing professional development activities, encouraging teachers to work with active learning methodologies, digital technologies, and play-based approaches, including games. In this way, teaching proposals become more closely aligned with students' needs, contemporary realities, and the competencies established in the curriculum.

Finally, transforming educational practices requires reviewing traditional conceptions of teaching, particularly when teachers move beyond the exclusive role of content transmitters and begin to mediate learning actively through playful approaches.

Fiorese and Trevisol (2024, p. 09) explain that:

> *Thus, teacher educators should seek, through their praxis, to foster the creation of spaces for reflection so that students become protagonists of their own learning process. To this end, their role as mediators of students' critical thinking and agency is essential, through a pedagogical practice that is problem-posing, reflective, and challenging. Teachers who base their pedagogical practice on mediation and interaction with students, encouraging them to seek and construct knowledge, reject the traditional formula of content reproduction and the standardization of individuals. Such a practice can be considered innovative insofar as it promotes student agency.*

Understanding this perspective also requires acknowledging a limitation: games and play-based practices do not, in themselves, guarantee student agency. They can be incorporated into pedagogical work when teachers' mediation connects them to established educational objectives.

Kishimoto (2011) brings games, toys, and play together within the same field of discussion, helping to explain their relationship with education and child development. From this perspective, playfulness cannot be reduced to entertainment, as it involves interaction, participation, and the construction of meaning. Lara, Truquete, and Nascimento (2023) follow this line of inquiry by studying educational games in Mathematics teaching in Elementary Education, discussing their use as a methodological resource and providing practical contributions to the organization of pedagogical work through play-based activities. When used in this way, games encourage student participation and help address school content through challenges that require reasoning, interaction, and problem-solving.

The incorporation of digital technologies creates further possibilities for reorganizing these practices, particularly when technological resources serve clearly defined pedagogical objectives. Oliveira's (2020, p. 191) study highlights that:

> *Games are a human activity and a constituent element of culture, with a system of explicit and implicit rules. They meet needs, make it possible for social relationships to be constructed and reconstructed, promote interaction, stimulate discovery, interest, and reflection, facilitate the learning of scientific concepts, and influence psychological activities. They also promote the development of higher psychological functions and are related to the way of life and culture of societies.*

Play-based approaches, games in learning, and digital resources are not isolated dimensions. When integrated, they form the basis on which pedagogical innovation proposals become concrete. Moreover, they foster learning environments in which students participate actively, thereby contributing to the promotion of innovative school management. In this regard, the meta-analysis by Sailer and Homner (2020) on the gamification of learning contributes to the discussion of strategies that incorporate game elements into educational contexts. Table 2 below organizes these strategies alongside the theoretical contributions that support them, from the perspective of transforming educational practices.

Table 2. Pedagogical Innovation Strategies and Their Contributions to the Transformation of Educational Practices

Pedagogical strategy	Characteristics and contributions to pedagogical innovation	Author and abbreviated title of the work
Development of competencies and skills	Organization of educational practices aimed at developing competencies, critical thinking, communication, and digital culture.	Brasil (2018). *National Common Curricular Base*.
Student agency and teacher mediation	Emphasis on active student participation, reflection, problem-posing approaches, and pedagogical mediation in the construction of knowledge.	Fiorese and Trevisol (2024). *Innovative Pedagogical Practices*.
Playfulness and learning	Use of games, toys, and play as educational experiences that foster interaction and knowledge construction.	Kishimoto (2011). *Games, Toys, Play, and Education*.
Educational games in teaching	Incorporation of games as methodological resources for teaching curricular content, particularly Mathematics in Elementary Education.	Lara, Truquete, and Nascimento (2023). *Educational Games in Mathematics Teaching*.
Digital games and cognitive development	Use of digital games as resources for interaction, reflection, and learning scientific concepts, from a historical-cultural perspective.	Oliveira (2020). *Digital Games and Learning*.
Gamification of learning	Incorporation of characteristic game elements into educational activities to promote student participation and engagement.	Sailer and Homner (2020). *The Gamification of Learning*.

Source: Prepared by the author (2026), based on Brasil (2018), Fiorese and Trevisol (2024), Kishimoto (2011), Lara, Truquete, and Nascimento

(2023), Oliveira (2020), and Sailer and Homner (2020).

Implementing these strategies requires school leadership capable of coordinating three areas simultaneously: continuing teacher professional development, collectively developed planning, and systematic monitoring of teaching practices. Management does not impose play-based approaches and games from the top down. Instead, it creates the institutional conditions for incorporating them into learning in a planned manner, in accordance with curricular objectives, the resources actually available at the school, and students' characteristics.

A distinction that is often overlooked is worth emphasizing: pedagogical innovation does not consist merely of introducing a new methodology or digital tool and moving on. It transforms the organization of teaching work, classroom relationships, the ways in which students participate, and teacher-student interactions. By sustaining this process, educational leadership helps consolidate a culture of experimentation, initiative, solidarity, cooperation, and assessment of educational practices, guiding institutional changes toward the improvement and refinement of teaching and learning.

The incorporation of innovative pedagogical practices requires more than the ability to operate resources and apply teaching techniques. It is in this context that continuing teacher education assumes an important role in pedagogical work. From the perspective of Fiorese and Trevisol (2024), teacher mediation fosters situations in which active participation and reflection on content enable students to develop their capacity to construct knowledge. This perspective establishes a concrete responsibility for school leadership: creating collective professional development opportunities in which teachers

can revisit their experiences, identify difficulties, and design proposals that respond to the actual needs of their students. When this occurs, professional development ceases to be an activity disconnected from everyday school life and becomes part of the process of transforming educational practices.

This also applies, perhaps particularly, to the way play-based approaches are incorporated into classroom activities. By discussing games, toys, and play in the educational context, Kishimoto (2011) distinguishes the specific characteristics of these practices and the different functions they perform in learning processes. This distinction goes beyond terminology: selecting a play-based activity requires consideration of students' characteristics and age groups, the content being taught, and the learning experiences intended. In practice, school management should encourage interdisciplinary planning and the sharing of experiences among teachers so that play-based approaches are incorporated into teaching proposals with clear pedagogical intentions and curricular alignment, rather than being treated as isolated recreational activities unrelated to the intended learning objectives.

Educational games also expand the possibilities for organizing pedagogical work when they involve situations that require reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving. Lara, Truquete, and Nascimento (2023) discuss these resources in Mathematics teaching in the early years of Elementary Education and provide insights into how they can be incorporated into teaching strategies and encourage student participation in knowledge construction. Based on this discussion, school leadership should encourage the development of instructional sequences that integrate curricular content, challenges, and collaborative activities, taking into account

the actual conditions of implementation and the specific characteristics of each student group. The assessment of these instructional sequences should not be limited to the level of student engagement. It should also consider what students have actually learned and the difficulties encountered throughout the process.

The transformation of educational practices also involves incorporating game elements into teaching and learning processes, particularly when these elements are combined with digital technologies. Sailer and Homner (2020), in their meta-analysis of learning gamification, examine the effects of using game-related elements in educational contexts. This approach allows for the consideration of progressive challenges, goal setting, feedback, and performance monitoring, provided that these strategies are aligned with pedagogical objectives. School management is responsible for monitoring the implementation of these proposals, discussing their outcomes with teachers, and identifying the conditions required for their improvement. In this sense, pedagogical innovation becomes institutionalized through the practical processes of planning, experimentation, and assessment, with leadership decisions contributing to the continuity of educational practices and the improvement of learning experiences.

2.3. Leadership And The Promotion Of Learning

Student learning is one of the most significant concerns in school management, requiring a form of leadership capable of planning, monitoring pedagogical work, setting goals, providing teacher professional development, and assessing educational processes simultaneously rather than sequentially. Managing resources and organizing institutional routines are part of the school principal's

responsibilities, but they do not encompass the entirety of the role. The principal must also create opportunities and conditions for teachers to identify difficulties, diversify teaching strategies, and monitor students' development. Oliveira and Carvalho (2018) relate school management, principal leadership, and educational outcomes, demonstrating how management practices organize pedagogical work. From this same perspective, games and play-based approaches to learning are included in discussions of pedagogical monitoring, given the opportunities for student participation and interaction they offer in different educational situations.

Pedagogical leadership involves the ability to mobilize school professionals around common objectives so that decisions are guided by the institution's needs and the characteristics of the students themselves.

Gobbi *et al.* (2020, p. 199) explain that:

> *Pedagogical leadership and engagement reflect School Management, since they are manifestations caused by School Management and, at the same time, strengthen School Management itself. Therefore, School Management is understood as a complex practice that organizes planning, participation, and the autonomy of the school unit, as well as its relationship with the community, the assessment of pedagogical activities, and the structural and material resources employed in these practices.*

Leadership, participation, and pedagogical organization do not operate independently. It is precisely their organic integration that

makes it possible to consider incorporating play-based approaches and games into collective planning. Teachers and pedagogical coordinators can incorporate them into learning activities, provided that they establish their educational purposes and continuously monitor their implementation.

Monitoring educational outcomes, in turn, cannot be reduced to the traditional classification of students. It requires targeted assessment practices that help explain how each student is developing their learning.

Freitas *et al.* (2014, p. 25) state that “assessment, regardless of content and method, imposes a model of reasoning, a way of thinking, and a way for teachers to relate to students, embedded in their specific practices.” This reflection makes it possible to recognize that assessment expresses pedagogical conceptions and influences the relationships established within the school environment.

In discussing formative assessment, Hoffmann (2014) understands learning monitoring as an ongoing process: teachers observe what students do, interpret their responses, and, based on this analysis, reorganize their instructional interventions. In this process, play-based approaches and games in learning can make interactions, problem-solving strategies, and knowledge construction visible. This possibility, however, depends on assessment criteria that are consistent with the intended learning objectives. Without this alignment, observing an activity loses its connection to assessment.

Promoting learning also depends on teacher professional development and leadership's ability to provide ongoing opportunities for reflection on pedagogical work. By developing and

validating an instrument to analyze school leadership in Brazil, Nascente and Carvalho (2026) help specify the dimensions involved in exercising this role within the educational context. Among other responsibilities, school principals encourage and provide conditions for collaborative work, promote the exchange of experiences among teachers, and support them in interpreting and analyzing classroom results. Through this shared work, educational technologies and diverse methodologies, including play-based approaches and games in learning, can be discussed. When they remain isolated resources or recreational activities disconnected from the curriculum, they do not fulfill the purposes addressed here. Their use requires planning, intentionality, teacher mediation, and attention to students' learning needs.

Institutional conditions also influence the relationship between school leadership and learning, particularly when pedagogical actions are put into practice. Through a three-level meta-analysis focusing on leadership practices and student outcomes, Tan, Dimmock, and Walker (2024) provide a basis for examining how leaders' actions are associated with different aspects of student performance. Improving these outcomes, however, does not result solely from the isolated actions of the school principal. Institutional organization, working conditions, available resources, community participation, and the specific characteristics of each school context are also involved. Therefore, incorporating play-based approaches and games into learning requires planning, appropriate materials, adequate material resources, teacher professional development, and monitoring of the effects of these activities on student participation and development. Table 3 summarizes these relationships by bringing together the dimensions of school leadership and the contributions each can make to promoting learning.

Performance indicators provide relevant information about students' learning, but they only make sense when read in light of the institutional conditions under which teaching and learning actually happen. Oliveira and Carvalho (2018), examining school management, principal leadership and educational outcomes in Brazil, connect these results to the organization of school practices. For principals, the caution is practical: poor results cannot be pinned on teachers or students alone, and information from pedagogical monitoring has to be weighed against institutional conditions, teaching arrangements and the support available to students. When the data is read alongside these factors, it becomes possible to identify what may be limiting learning and to set management priorities on that basis rather than on a partial reading of the numbers.

Table 3. Dimensions of School Leadership and Strategies for Promoting Learning

Area of leadership	**Educational strategies and practices**	**Contributions to learning**	**Author and abbreviated title of the work**
Pedagogical leadership and participatory management	Collective planning, professional engagement, and coordination with the school community.	Strengthening pedagogical organization and the institutional conditions for teaching.	Gobbi *et al.* (2020). *Good Management Improves School Performance*.
Educational assessment	Analysis of results, identification of difficulties, and use of assessment information to guide	Reorientation of teaching and monitoring of students' learning needs.	Freitas *et al.* (2014). *Educational Assessment: Moving Against the Current*.

	pedagogical decisions.		
Formative assessment	Continuous observation, dialogue with students, and review of teachers' instructional interventions.	Understanding individual learning processes and adapting educational practices.	Hoffmann (2014). *Formative Assessment*.
Leadership training and development	Development of leadership competencies, reflection on management practices, and strengthening of management procedures.	Improving school principals' performance and pedagogical monitoring.	Nascente and Carvalho (2026). *School Leadership in Brazil*.
Management monitoring and educational outcomes	Organization of school activities, monitoring of pedagogical actions, and analysis of educational outcomes.	Coordination between leadership, management practices, and improved learning outcomes.	Oliveira and Carvalho (2018). *School Management, Principal Leadership, and Educational Outcomes in Brazil*.
Leadership and student outcomes	Analysis of leadership practices and their relationship with educational outcomes.	Understanding leadership's contributions to different dimensions of student learning.	Tan, Dimmock, and Walker (2024). *How School Leadership Practices Relate to Student Outcomes*.

Source: Prepared by the author, based on Freitas *et al.* (2014), Gobbi *et al.* (2020), Hoffmann (2014), Nascente and Carvalho (2026), Oliveira

and Carvalho (2018), and Tan, Dimmock, and Walker (2024).

What Table 3 summarizes is that learning cannot be sustained by any single dimension in isolation. It depends on how leadership, assessment, teacher professional development, and the organization of educational practices are connected in everyday school life. This is not a trivial consideration for school principals because, in practice, they must respond to administrative demands while monitoring pedagogical work, ensuring that teachers have genuine opportunities to participate in decision-making, and taking into account that students do not all start from the same point when teaching strategies are defined. The use of educational technologies, play-based approaches, and games in learning does not eliminate the need for careful judgment. Pedagogical criteria are required to assess the appropriateness of each resource and its contribution to educational objectives. In this regard, school leadership is responsible for coordinating these dimensions and guiding institutional decisions and teaching practices based on identified needs and the results of educational monitoring.

Keeping learning initiatives going depends, in part, on whether school leaders can judge if their institutional decisions are changing pedagogical practice, and whether those changes last. Tan, Dimmock and Walker (2024) trace how leadership practices relate to student outcomes, and their findings support treating leadership as something that matters well past the point where a decision gets signed off. What this means concretely is that principals need some way of going back to objectives they set earlier, checking whether progress actually happened, and deciding what needs adjusting. The same procedures can help separate a short-lived improvement from a change that has become part of the school's educational

practice. By reviewing decisions in this way, school leaders strengthen institutional responsibility for learning. They are also less likely to let immediate demands consume their attention, since each decision can be considered in relation to the sustained improvement of educational processes.

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was adopted, within a basic research framework, with exploratory and descriptive objectives and bibliographic and documentary procedures. According to Creswell (2014), this approach makes it possible to examine research questions through the meanings and perspectives that emerge from the object under investigation. Based on this framework, the study examined the scientific literature on innovative school management, educational leadership, pedagogical innovation, and the promotion of student learning, seeking to understand how the work of management teams is connected to changes in educational practices.

The bibliographic survey covered national and international publications identified in academic databases and repositories: the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), the Journals Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Scopus, Web of Science, the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), and Oasisbr. Academic publishers' catalogs and universities' institutional repositories were also consulted when they provided sufficient bibliographic information to identify and retrieve the documents. This procedure was based on the conception of bibliographic research adopted by Neubauer and

Eckert (2025), according to which this type of scientific investigation requires the systematic identification, selection, and analysis of publications relevant to the research topic.

Descriptors in Portuguese and English guided the searches, either on their own or in combinations built with Boolean operators. The Portuguese descriptors were “gestão escolar inovadora” (innovative school management), “liderança educacional” (educational leadership), “liderança pedagógica” (pedagogical leadership), “gestão democrática” (democratic management), “inovação pedagógica” (pedagogical innovation), “formação continuada de professores” (continuing teacher education), “práticas educativas” (educational practices), “ludicidade” (playfulness), “jogos na aprendizagem” (games in learning), “avaliação da aprendizagem” (learning assessment), and “resultados educacionais” (educational outcomes). Where applicable, searches used the corresponding terms in both languages, including “instructional leadership,” “educational games,” and “student learning outcomes.”

The selection of sources considered thematic relevance, timeliness, editorial quality, methodological consistency, and the possibility of tracing each publication. Priority was given to scientific articles published in journals with verifiable editorial identification, peer-review policies, and indexing. However, papers presented at recognized scientific events, books and chapters published by academic publishers, institutional documents, and postgraduate research deposited in university repositories were also considered. Every article included had a valid and verifiable DOI; every book had its corresponding ISBN; and every institutional document provided identification of the responsible body and an official access address.

The period from 2018 to 2026 was adopted as the primary time frame, while earlier works remained eligible when their theoretical contributions helped clarify the concepts under investigation. In compiling the references, the study sought to maintain a proportion of approximately 80% national sources and 20% international sources. Recent publications accounted for the majority, representing approximately 85% of the selected material.

Materials directly related to at least one of the thematic areas were eligible for inclusion, provided they presented an identifiable theoretical foundation, verifiable bibliographic information, and some contribution to clarifying school management, educational leadership, pedagogical innovation, or learning. The selection process excluded materials without identifiable authorship or provenance, publications lacking sufficient information for retrieval, and opinion pieces without academic grounding. Articles were also excluded when the journal's editorial identity or peer-review policy could not be adequately verified.

Once the survey was complete, the selected studies were sorted into four thematic areas: school management and leadership, pedagogical innovation, play-based learning and educational games, and pedagogical monitoring and assessment. Together, these areas supported an analysis of how institutional management, leadership practices and pedagogical strategies relate to student learning.

The four areas did not become four subsections. The theoretical framework had three, with the areas distributed according to their conceptual relationships. The first addressed the foundations of innovative school management and educational leadership. The

second considered leadership strategies for pedagogical innovation, particularly playfulness and educational games, while the third examined leadership, pedagogical monitoring and assessment in relation to educational outcomes.

Reading began with an exploratory pass, followed by selective and then interpretative reading. Across these stages, the aim was to identify points of agreement and disagreement among the authors, establish what each study contributed and locate gaps in the literature consulted.

The review was complemented by a documentary examination of legislation and official documents addressing democratic management, the organization of Basic Education, teacher education, innovation and curricular guidelines. Following Arantes (2025), this stage involved identifying, selecting and examining documents relevant to the research problem, with attention to their nature, provenance and possible contribution to the investigation. Considered together with the bibliographic sources, this material supported a critical examination of what school leadership can accomplish and the difficulties it encounters in building institutional environments conducive to innovation and learning.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research went beyond examining which new resources schools had incorporated or which methodologies they had begun to adopt. It showed that innovation in school management lies in management decisions, professional relationships, the pedagogical intentionality of those leading the process, and the continuous monitoring of teaching and learning. Understanding this type of

innovation helps clarify the challenges facing education today, which require leadership, institutional organization, and the transformation of educational practices to be addressed in an integrated manner rather than as separate elements. Within this framework, leadership is responsible for coordinating the institutional and pedagogical dimensions that schools need to develop more participatory and reflective educational environments focused on student learning.

The research question guiding this study was addressed within the limits imposed by a bibliographic and documentary review. The analysis makes it possible to identify, based on the literature and documents examined, how leadership in school management can foster institutional and pedagogical innovation processes, without empirically demonstrating that these processes actually occur in any particular school. Such leadership is put into practice when it coordinates collective planning, values the participation of education professionals, encourages teacher development, and organizes the monitoring and assessment of educational practices. The general objective and the three specific objectives were also achieved. The study examined the foundations of innovative school management and educational leadership, discussed strategies for encouraging pedagogical innovation, and analyzed the contributions and challenges of leadership in promoting learning, taking into account teacher development, educational technologies, and the monitoring of educational processes.

School leadership should be understood beyond the notion of a hierarchical or purely administrative responsibility. What mobilizes and coordinates the institution is a practice built into the daily work of management, which can foster a culture of innovation only when

management team decisions, educational objectives, and the participation of different segments of the school community are aligned. The second section showed that pedagogical innovation is linked to organizational conditions that enable collaborative work among teachers, the examination of teaching practices, and the use of varied learning strategies. In this context, playfulness and games can be incorporated into intentional pedagogical approaches, provided that they are aligned with curricular objectives, involve teacher mediation, and take students' characteristics into account. Simply adopting different methodologies is not enough: innovation requires these methodologies to be consistently integrated into the institution's pedagogical project.

The third section showed that promoting learning requires leadership that pays attention to teacher development, formative assessment, pedagogical monitoring, and the interpretation of educational outcomes. However, an objection raised in the literature itself deserves serious consideration: establishing institutional conditions conducive to improving teaching is one thing, while ensuring that these conditions actually improve learning is another. This is because the effects of leadership cannot be separated from working conditions, available resources, educational inequalities, and the characteristics of each school community. Considered together, the three sections make it possible to understand innovative management as an integrated process in which leadership, professional collaboration, pedagogical innovation, and assessment mutually influence one another. The study's contribution lies in situating playfulness and games in learning within this process, as pedagogical possibilities that must be planned, mediated, and assessed rather than treated as isolated

initiatives. This approach presupposes a management model committed to student development.

The scope of these conclusions is limited by the research procedures adopted. As this was a bibliographic and documentary study, it did not involve observations in schools, interviews with school administrators or teachers, or empirical assessments of pedagogical interventions. The relationships discussed are interpretations based on the literature and documents examined, and do not provide a basis for establishing causal effects or generalizing findings obtained in specific institutions.

Future research could conduct field studies in schools from different contexts, investigating how leadership practices take shape in institutional organization and pedagogical work. It would also be worthwhile to hear from school administrators, teachers, and students about teacher development, the use of educational technologies, formative assessment, and the actual contributions of play-based activities and games to different dimensions of learning, beyond what the literature suggests they should contribute. Such investigations could clarify the conditions under which innovative management proposals are consistently incorporated into school realities.

REFERENCES

ARANTES, T. R. de R. Documentary research, bibliographic research, and systematic review: defining aspects and brief considerations. *Interdisciplinary Studies Notebooks*, v. 7, n. 2, e722501, 2025. ISSN 2764-394X. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15799019.

BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. *Base Nacional Comum Curricular*. Brasília, DF: MEC, 2018. Disponível em: http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/. Acesso em: 13 nov. 2026.

CRESWELL, J. W. *Investigação qualitativa e projeto de pesquisa*: escolhendo entre cinco abordagens. São Paulo: Penso, 2014.

FIORESE, C. E.; TREVISOL, M. T. C. Práticas pedagógicas inovadoras: critérios atribuídos por professores(as) formadores(as) que atuam em cursos de Pedagogia. *Educação em Revista*, Belo Horizonte, v. 40, e45698, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-45698.

FREITAS, L. C. de; SORDI, M. R. L. de; MALAVASI, M. M. S.; FREITAS, H. C. L. de. *Avaliação educacional*: caminhando pela contramão. 7. ed. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2014.

GOBBI, B. C.; LACRUZ, A. J.; AMÉRICO, B. L.; ZANQUETTO FILHO, H. Uma boa gestão melhora o desempenho da escola, mas o que sabemos acerca do efeito da complexidade da gestão nessa relação? *Ensaio: Avaliação e Políticas Públicas em Educação,* Rio de Janeiro, v. 28, n. 106, p. 198-220, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-40362019002701786.

HOFFMANN, J. *Avaliação mediadora:* uma prática em construção da pré-escola à universidade. 33. ed. Porto Alegre: Mediação, 2014.

KISHIMOTO, T. M. (org.). *Jogo, brinquedo, brincadeira e a educação*. 14. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2011.

LARA, V. M.; TRUQUETE, M. K.; NASCIMENTO, D. A. do. Os jogos didáticos como recurso metodológico para o ensino de Matemática

no Ensino Fundamental. *Revista Exitus*, Santarém, v. 13, n. 1, e023017, 2023. https://doi.org/10.24065/2237-9460.2023v13n1ID1965.

LÜCK, H. *Liderança em gestão escolar*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2014.

NASCENTE, R. M. M.; CARVALHO, C. P. de. Lideranças escolares no Brasil: construção, testagem e validação de um instrumento. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos,* Brasília, DF, v. 107, 2026. https://doi.org/10.24109/2176-6681.rbep.107.6639.

NEUBAUER, V. S.; ECKERT, N. H. Pesquisa bibliográfica como metodologia de pesquisa científica. *RELACult: Revista Latino-Americana de Estudos em Cultura e Sociedade*, [S. l.], v. 11, 2025. https://doi.org/10.23899/g0q8kq90.

OLIVEIRA, A. C. P. de; CARVALHO, C. P. de. Gestão escolar, liderança do diretor e resultados educacionais no Brasil. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 23, e230015, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782018230015.

OLIVEIRA, A. M. de. Jogos digitais e aprendizagem: um estudo pela perspectiva da teoria histórico-cultural. *Revista Brasileira de Ensino de Ciência e Tecnologia*, Ponta Grossa, v. 13, n. 3, 2020. https://doi.org/10.3895/rbect.v13n3.10420.

SAILER, M.; HOMNER, L. The gamification of learning: a meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, v. 32, p. 77-112, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-019-09498-w

SIMIELLI, L.; OLIVEIRA, A. C. P. de; CARVALHO, C. P. de. Gestão escolar no Brasil: análise histórica e discussão de caminhos futuros.

Educação e Pesquisa, São Paulo, v. 52, e299475, 2026. https://doi.org/10.1590/S1678-4634202652299475por.

TAN, C. Y.; DIMMOCK, C.; WALKER, A. How school leadership practices relate to student outcomes: insights from a three-level meta-analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, v. 52, n. 1, p. 6-27, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432211061445.

WEINSTEIN, J.; SIMIELLI, L. (org.). *Liderança escolar: diretores como fatores-chave para a transformação da educação no Brasil*. Brasília, DF: UNESCO, 2022.

---

[1] Master's Degree in Social History from the Federal University of Ceará (UFC).

[2] Specialist in Portuguese Language and Literature from Faculdade Farias Brito and in Public Education Management from the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF).

[3] Master's Degree in Teaching of Humanities and Social Sciences (POSENSINO), offered through a partnership between UERN, UFERSA, and IFRN.

[4] Master's Degree in Management and Evaluation of Public Education (Federal University of Juiz de Fora – UFJF).

[5] Ph.D. in Education from the Federal University of Ceará (UFC).

[6] Master's Degree in Climatology from the State University of Ceará (UECE).

[7] Master's Degree in Educational Sciences Universidad del Sol

[8] Postgraduate Degree in Criminal Law from Uniateneu University Center

[9] Postgraduate Studies in Business Administration at the State University of Vale do Acaraú (UVA).

[10] Doctoral Student in Education Sciences Universidad del Sol

[11] Professional Master's Degree in Management and Evaluation of Public Education at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF).

[12] Dr. in Biological Sciences (Cultural Title) (FICL); Master's degree in Crop Science (UFC). E-mail: acesse o artigo original para visualizar o e-mail

[13] Doctoral Student in Education Sciences Universidad del Sol