



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

**A AÇÃO ESTRATÉGICA NAS ESCOLAS PORTUGUESAS: O CASO
DOS PLANOS DE AÇÃO ESTRATÉGICA**

Tese apresentada à Universidade Católica Portuguesa
para obtenção do grau de Doutor em Ciências da Educação

por

Marisa Simões Carvalho

FACULDADE DE EDUCAÇÃO E PSICOLOGIA

Janeiro, 2020



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Sob orientação de Professora Doutora Ilídia Cabral e Professor Doutor José
Verdasca

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Ao Duarte e à Violeta

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Resumo

A ação estratégica nas escolas portuguesas: O caso dos Planos de Ação Estratégica

As questões relacionadas com o sucesso escolar, e a correspondente melhoria e eficácia das escolas, continuam a ser finalidades dos sistemas educativos em diferentes países. Neste âmbito, verifica-se um progressivo entendimento das escolas como organizações dotadas de autonomia e, por isso, capazes de gerir o seu próprio processo de melhoria através de soluções estratégicas que, simultaneamente, respondam a exigências e necessidades da organização escolar e contribuam para reforçar a sua capacidade interna de mudança. Deste modo, o planeamento e a ação estratégica apresentam-se como ferramentas valiosas para a melhoria das escolas, configurando-se como relevantes objetos de estudo em educação. Nas últimas décadas, tem havido alguma investigação e debate acerca da temática da ação estratégica. Ainda assim, esta continua a constituir-se como um campo de estudo pouco explorado e a necessitar de aprofundamento. Esta tese inscreve-se nesta linha de investigação, procurando contribuir para a teoria, investigação e prática acerca da ação estratégica. Especificamente, procura compreender os processos de ação estratégica desenvolvidos nas escolas portuguesas e, por esta via, contribuir para a construção de um modelo de ação estratégica orientador das práticas em contexto educativo. Apresentam-se quatro estudos relacionados, centrados na ação estratégica das escolas portuguesas. O estudo 1 consiste numa revisão de literatura, tipo *scoping review*, acerca da estratégia e da liderança estratégica em educação. Sistematizam-se as principais características e práticas relacionadas com a estratégia. Este estudo dá suporte aos estudos 2, 3 e 4. O estudo 2

consiste na análise de conteúdo dos Planos de Ação Estratégica das escolas portuguesas, tomando como referência indicadores de qualidade. Verifica-se que os planos se apresentam alinhados, sobretudo, com algumas das prioridades nacionais, o que se evidencia nos objetivos e ações propostas (e.g., anos iniciais de ciclo, trabalho colaborativo). Além disso, a globalidade dos planos apresenta as ações a desenvolver e especifica mecanismos de implementação. Contudo, os planos apresentam fragilidades quanto à justificação das opções realizadas, às ações de monitorização e capacitação. Os planos parecem apresentar-se, sobretudo, como uma descrição ou listagem de ações a desenvolver, o que não induz ou traduz a qualidade de implementação das mesmas. O estudo 3 analisa a participação dos professores no processo de planeamento, implementação e monitorização de planos de ação. Os dados parecem indicar que o grau de participação dos profissionais na elaboração e implementação dos planos foi moderado a alto, variando em função do tempo de serviço e do exercício de cargos/funções de liderança. O estudo 4 centra-se nos processos de ação estratégica através da realização de estudos de caso. Este estudo permitiu identificar processos subjacentes à elaboração, implementação e monitorização dos planos, fatores críticos e impactos percecionados relacionados com os planos. Em síntese, globalmente destacam-se três dimensões principais da ação estratégica nas escolas, a saber: (i) a direção/sentido de ação, (ii) a intencionalidade estratégica e; (iii) a participação de professores e de outros atores na ação. Destes resultados tiram-se implicações para a prática e para a investigação futura.

Palavras-chave: estratégia, liderança estratégica, participação, sucesso escolar, melhoria e eficácia das escolas.

Abstract

Strategic action in Portuguese schools: The case of Strategic Action Plans

Issues related to academic success, and the corresponding school improvement and efficacy, are still being central aims of educational systems in different countries. There is a continuous understanding of schools as organizations with autonomy and knowledge to manage its improvement by strategic solutions that simultaneously answer to organizational needs and requests, and contribute to reinforce its capability of internal change. In that sense, strategic planning and strategic action have been identified as valuable frameworks for school improvement, being relevant topics of research in education. In the last decades, some research and debate have been made about strategic action. However, this is still a field of study little explored, and that needs to be deepened. This thesis subscribes to this line of research, seeking to contribute to theory, research, and practice about strategic action. Specifically, it aims a better understanding of strategic action processes in Portuguese schools and, by this, contribute to designing a strategic action model that guides practices in educational contexts. Four related studies about strategic action in Portuguese schools are presented. Study 1 is a literature review, scoping review type, about strategy and strategic leadership in education. Core characteristics and practices related to strategic action are systematized. This study is the theoretical grounding of studies 2, 3, and 4. Study 2 consists of a content analysis of strategic action plans of Portuguese schools considering quality indicators. Results indicate that plans are aligned, mostly, with national priorities, which is evidenced by its aims and actions (e.g., initial years of school cycles; collaborative work). Moreover, most of the

plans present actions and mechanisms for action implementation. However, plans are fragile, considering explanations for decisions taken, monitoring, and professional development. These plans seem much more description or a list of actions to be done, which may undermine the quality of the plans and also its implementation. Study 3 explores teachers' participation in planning, implementing and monitoring of schools' plans. Data indicate that participation degree in plans' planning and implementation is moderate to high, depending on teachers' experience and its professional roles. Study 4 is focused on strategic action processes employing a study case design. This study able to identify processes for elaboration, implementation, and monitoring of school plans, critical factors for strategic action, and perceived impacts of school plans. In summary, it is highlighted three critical dimensions of school strategic action, namely: (i) direction/action' path, (ii) strategic intentionality and (iii) teachers' and other stakeholders' participation. From these results, implications for practice and research are derived.

Keywords: Strategy, strategic leadership, participation, academic success, schools' efficacy and schools' improvement.

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Introdução

As questões relacionadas com o sucesso escolar, e a correspondente melhoria e eficácia das escolas, continuam a ser finalidades dos sistemas educativos em diferentes países e também objeto da investigação em educação (e.g. Bellei, Vanni, Valenzuela & Contreras, 2016; Hajisoteriou, Karousiou & Angelides, 2018; Harris, Adams, Jones & Muniandy, 2015; Hopkins, Stringfield, Harris, Stoll & Mackay, 2014; Leithwood, Jantzi & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006; Reynolds et al., 2014). Neste âmbito, verifica-se um progressivo entendimento das escolas como organizações dotadas de autonomia e, por isso, capazes de gerir o seu próprio processo de melhoria através de soluções estratégicas que, simultaneamente, respondam a exigências e necessidades da organização escolar e contribuam para reforçar a sua capacidade interna de mudança (Barroso, 2018; Bolívar, 2012; Costa, 2003; Machado, 2017). Deste modo, o planeamento e a ação estratégica apresentam-se como ferramentas valiosas para a melhoria das escolas (e.g., Costa, 2003; Davies, 2006a, 2007; Eacott, 2008ab, 2011; Quong & Walker, 2010; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014), configurando-se como relevantes objetos de estudo em educação.

A ação estratégica é o objeto de estudo desta tese de doutoramento. Nesta introdução fazemos uma breve análise do quadro teórico que suporta o trabalho desenvolvido, identificamos as políticas educativas nacionais que motivaram a definição do nosso objeto de estudo e apresentamos o problema, questões de investigação e estrutura deste trabalho.

Ação estratégica nas escolas: Conceitos e modelos teóricos

O conceito de estratégia é relativamente recente na investigação educacional, verificando-se ainda a existência de um corpo teórico limitado (Chan, 2018; Cheng, 2015; Eacott, 2011). É um constructo que tem vindo a ser

negligenciado, pelo que o conhecimento acerca do tema é incompleto e algo confuso, o que parece resultar numa visão limitada do mesmo (Eacott, 2008ab, 2011). Importado do domínio empresarial, o conceito de estratégia surgiu na literatura educacional em 1980, com a emergência de políticas de incentivo à autonomia e responsabilidade das escolas em termos de eficácia e de prestação de contas. Contudo, só no final da década de 80 se verificou um impulso significativo na investigação em torno da temática, com especial enfoque no planeamento estratégico (Eacott, 2007; 2008ab). A investigação desenvolvida procurou, sobretudo, responder à questão “*Como elaborar um Plano de Desenvolvimento*”, centrando-se assim nos processos de planeamento (Eacott, 2007, 2008ab).

Na base desta conceção estão modelos mecanicistas ou racionais, segundo os quais a estratégia coincide com a elaboração de um plano de ação baseado na racionalidade estratégica (Eacott, 2007) inerente à ação lógica, mecânica e autónoma de um dado líder (Costa & Castanheira, 2015). Confunde-se a estratégia com o planeamento estratégico, pela assunção de que basta um *bom plano* para a melhoria das escolas. Esta é uma visão redutora da ação estratégica em educação (Eacott, 2007, 2010), tanto mais que as organizações, atualmente, tendem a ser organizações flexíveis, instáveis, sujeitas à turbulência do mundo exterior e, por isso, marcadas pela instabilidade, incerteza e imprevisibilidade (Costa & Figueiredo, 2013). Neste sentido, o desenho e adoção de planos estratégicos pormenorizados, sequenciais e lógicos, baseados numa lógica de racionalidade e coerência, tendem a ser postos em causa.

Sendo o planeamento relevante, trata-se de um conceito distinto do conceito de ação estratégica, ainda que os mesmos estejam necessariamente relacionados (Davies, 2003, 2006a; Eacott, 2008ab; Quong & Walker, 2010). A

elaboração e a implementação de planos perspectivam-se como fases distintas, mas relacionadas, da ação estratégica. A qualidade da ação relaciona-se com a qualidade dos planos quando estes são estrategicamente desenhados (Davies, 2006ab, 2007; Eacott, 2008a, 2011; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019). O planeamento e a ação decorrem, necessariamente e de forma relacionada, da estratégia. Como afirma Bell (1998),

Planning based on a coherent strategy demands that the aims of the school are challenged, that both present and future environmental influences inform the development of the strategy, that there should be a clear and well-articulated vision of what the school should be like in the future and that planning should be long-term and holistic. (p. 453)

Neste sentido, mais do que planear a ação, é prioritário planear o sentido da ação, constituindo-se o plano ou o projeto como um instrumento operacional de compromisso e de expressão desse mesmo sentido de ação (Costa, 2003). A estratégia não pode ser confundida com uma atividade burocrática de produção de planos. A estratégia é, sobretudo, um dispositivo que permite alinhar os aspetos operacionais da escola com a concretização de uma visão comum (Eacott, 2008a). Para isso, é necessário adotar uma perspetiva compreensiva, integrada e alargada, de acordo com a qual a estratégia é entendida como uma forma de pensar e intencionalmente agir na escola no sentido de uma dada visão (Davies, 2003, 2006b; Eacott, 2008ab; Quong & Walker, 2010).

Os trabalhos de Davies e colaboradores (Davies, 2003, 2004; Davies & Davies, 2004, 2006, 2010) e de Eacott (2008ab, 2010, 2011) foram essenciais na mudança de racional acerca da ação estratégica, oferecendo um modelo compreensivo e integrado acerca da estratégia nas escolas.

Eacott (2006, 2007, 2010) apresenta um modelo compreensivo que contempla diferentes dimensões, pondo em evidência a complexidade inerente à ação estratégica. O autor define a estratégia como “leadership strategies and behaviours relating to the initiation, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategic actions within an educational institution, taking into consideration the unique context (past, present and future) and availability of resources, physical, financial and human” (Eacott, 2006, p. 1). O autor sinaliza as fases ou ações subjacentes à estratégia (iniciação, desenvolvimento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação) em relação com o conhecimento específico e contextualizado acerca da escola (história, características, visão). Nos seus trabalhos destaca-se, em especial, esta conceção contextualizada da ação estratégica.

Davies (2006b) sinaliza os aspetos centrais relativos ao conceito de estratégia, identificando-a como um quadro da ação presente e futura, assente no pensamento estratégico, orientado por metas de médio a longo prazo consubstanciadas em ações gerais que determinam a direção da organização, garantindo a sustentabilidade da mesma. Neste enquadramento, o autor fala numa escola estrategicamente focada (*strategically focused school*) e define-a como “one that is educationally effective in the short-term but also has a clear framework and processes to translate core moral purpose and vision into excellent educational provision that is challenging and sustainable in the medium-to long-term” (Davies, 2006b, p. 4). Neste sentido, a construção de uma escola estrategicamente focada implica uma liderança estratégica.

Apesar da relevância da liderança no contexto da ação estratégica, não cabe aqui uma apresentação extensiva do tópico, dado o extenso e diverso quadro teórico e empírico que o define (Costa & Castanheira, 2015; Costa &

Figueiredo, 2013; Costa, Mendes & Ventura, 2000; Figueiredo, Costa & Castanheira, 2013; Tintoré, 2017; Tintoré & Güell, 2016). Destacamos, em especial, a dimensão da estratégia como elemento central de qualquer ação de liderança. A liderança estratégica não é aqui entendida como mais um modelo teórico de liderança mas como uma componente crítica na ação estratégica dirigida à melhoria das escolas (Davies & Davies, 2004, 2006; Eacott, 2010, 2011).

A liderança estratégica define-se, sobretudo, pela adoção de uma visão que alinha a direção de uma dada escola em termos de ação de médio e longo prazo no sentido da melhoria e eficácia (Davies & Davies, 2010; Eacott, 2011). Davies e Davies (2006) consideram que os líderes estratégicos se caracterizam por apresentarem: (i) insatisfação ou inquietação com o presente; (ii) capacidade para priorizar o pensamento estratégico e a aprendizagem contínua; (iii) capacidade para criar modelos mentais organizadores da compreensão e da prática e; (iv) redes pessoais e profissionais fortes. Além disso, estes líderes privilegiam, sobretudo, atividades orientadas para: (i) a direção ou sentido de ação da escola; (ii) a tradução da estratégia em ação; (iii) a capacitação dos profissionais para desenvolver e implementar a estratégia; (iv) a definição de aspetos essenciais à intervenção e; (v) o desenvolvimento de competências estratégicas. A propósito deste modelo, destacamos alguns aspetos referenciados na literatura, nomeadamente as questões da direção ou sentido da ação, do pensamento e intencionalidade estratégicos e da participação e envolvimento dos profissionais (e.g. Cheng, 2015; Costa & Figueiredo, 2013; Davies & Davies, 2010; Eacott, 2011; Garza, Drysdale, Gurr, Jacobson & Merchant, 2014; Strunk, Marsh, Bush-Mecenas & Duque, 2016), que se alinham

com algumas das práticas eficazes de liderança referenciadas na literatura recente neste âmbito (cf. Tintoré, 2017).

Eacott (2007) apresenta um modelo de hierarquia organizacional que situa a direção e planeamento estratégicos de forma articulada com outras dimensões. A direção estratégica, tendo por base o sentido da ação da escola, estabelece o estado futuro desejado, determinando de forma explícita e deliberada o plano estratégico (3-5 anos), o plano operacional (0-2 anos) e as ações diárias. Pode dizer-se que a ação estratégica não se limita à criação de novas formas de conduzir as mesmas ações, mas implica repensar a natureza das ações (Eacott, 2010).

A intencionalidade subjacente à ação estratégica é, pois, um aspecto crucial. Como afirma Eacott (2010), “the distinction that exists here is between acting and having a reason, compared to acting because of that reason” (p.57). A estratégia deverá, então, ser entendida como um elemento que facilita o alinhamento deliberado e intencional entre a estrutura organizacional e os recursos humanos da organização tendo em conta o desempenho da mesma (Eacott, 2008a). Neste sentido, a estratégia é uma dinâmica intencional em progresso no sentido da mudança organizacional, onde todos os elementos da escola devem ser considerados.

O desenvolvimento de planos de ação implica, assim, uma atuação conjunta e articulada que supõe o conhecimento, o envolvimento e o compromisso de diferentes elementos da escola e da comunidade (Cheng, 2015; Costa, 2003). Cheng (2015) destaca que a participação de diferentes atores da escola na fase do planeamento é um elemento essencial, revelando-se mais importante do que o resultado do planeamento em si mesmo. Tornar as mudanças parte integrante da cultura da escola exige implicação, compromisso

e envolvimento da comunidade educativa na definição da resposta a um dado problema/necessidade identificado (Bolívar, 2012; Cheng, 2015; Harris, 2010). Uma escola mais participada, democrática e estratégica implica que os processos de tomada de decisão e de planeamento se constituam como espaços de exercício de autonomia e de participação (Costa, 2003).

Assim, a ação estratégica deve ser compreensiva, extensiva, integradora e articulada (Cheng, 2015), exigindo relações menos hierarquizadas e verticalizadas, maior distribuição de poder na organização, maior flexibilidade e responsividade (Bell, 1998) e, ainda, iniciativa, intencionalidade e participação (Costa, 2003). Por conseguinte, o planeamento decorrente da ação estratégica deve ser expressão destas características. A este propósito, destacamos a proposta de Murillo e Krichesky (2012) relativa às características a que deve obedecer a elaboração de planos de ação. Estes devem ser fundamentados (no diagnóstico prévio e na literatura científica), participados e conciliadores (envolvendo toda a comunidade nas diferentes fases, permitindo a partilha e o consenso), realistas e possíveis (com objetivos realistas e orientação para a ação), globais (incluir uma visão alargada do fenómeno e dos elementos que o influenciam) e claros e concisos (conforme expresso num documento breve, de fácil leitura e com os elementos essenciais). Parece-nos que esta forma de pensar os planos de ação põe em evidência dimensões essenciais da ação estratégica, indo além do plano *per se*.

Face ao exposto, percebe-se que nas últimas décadas tem havido alguma investigação e debate acerca da temática da ação estratégica. Ainda assim, esta continua a constituir-se como um campo de estudo pouco explorado a necessitar de aprofundamento. Eacott (2008b) apresenta um estudo de meta-análise da literatura publicada entre 1980 e 2005 acerca da estratégia,

analisando 70 artigos provenientes de 14 revistas científicas relacionadas com a administração, gestão e lideranças escolares. Estes artigos incluem trabalhos teóricos e estudos empíricos numa proporção aproximada. Em termos conceptuais, ainda que se identifique a emergência de uma visão holística da estratégia, continua a verificar-se uma forte incidência de modelos associados à racionalidade estratégica oriundos do domínio empresarial. Uma parte significativa dos estudos foca-se nos planos e no processo de planeamento, excluindo outros aspetos da estratégia (escolha, implementação e avaliação estratégicas). Do ponto de vista teórico, os estudos recorrem a diversos enquadramentos conceptuais, o que é coerente com a inexistência de uma definição consensual de estratégia e com o número limitado de investigações empíricas sobre o assunto. No mesmo sentido, trabalhos mais recentes acentuam a necessidade de investigação neste domínio, tendo em vista a definição e aprofundamento do conceito e modelos de ação estratégica, a clarificação de dimensões implicadas nos processos de ação estratégica, a integração da ação estratégica nos processos de eficácia e melhoria das escolas e o impacto dos planos de ação estratégica na melhoria dos processos e dos resultados escolares (e.g. Bellei et al., 2016; Eacott, 2010; Harris et al., 2015; Hopkins et al., 2014; Reynolds et al., 2014).

Políticas educativas nacionais: Promoção do sucesso escolar e ação estratégica

As preocupações com a melhoria dos processos e dos resultados educativos constituem prioridades da política educativa nacional em Portugal desde a década de 80 do século XIX (Cabral, 2013; Machado, 2017). A expansão da escolaridade obrigatória e a permanência das elevadas taxas de insucesso

motivaram a progressiva definição de políticas de combate e prevenção do insucesso escolar, onde se incluem o Programa Integrado de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar (PIPSE, 1989), o Programa Educação para Todos (PEPT, 1991), o Plano para a Eliminação da Exploração do Trabalho Infantil (PEETI, 1999), o Plano Nacional de Prevenção do Abandono Escolar (PNAPAE, 2004), o programa Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária (TEIP, 1996, 2006, 2012), o Programa Mais Sucesso Escolar (2009) e o Programa Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar (2016) (Machado, 2017).

A análise evolutiva dos referidos programas põe em evidência a progressão das políticas no sentido da introdução de inovações em contexto escolar, procurando um compromisso entre os processos *top-down* e os processos *bottom-up* (Cabral, 2013; Machado, 2017). Acentua-se a atribuição de maior autonomia às escolas e aos seus profissionais (Barroso, 2018; Machado, 2017). Muito embora se argumente em favor de uma autonomia progressiva, nem sempre o aumento desta autonomia corresponde à melhoria nos resultados dos alunos, justificando-se uma reflexão em torno dos processos que garantem as vantagens da autonomia das escolas (cf. Barroso, 2018).

De facto, a sucessão de programas traduz a vontade de melhorar os processos e os resultados das escolas, comportando vantagens diversas em termos de identificação de necessidades, de foco progressivo na aprendizagem e sucesso escolar e de autonomia das escolas na tomada de decisão (Cabral, 2013; Machado, 2017). Ainda assim, levantam-se questões quanto ao impacto destes programas no sucesso escolar dos alunos, o que levou à organização de interessantes contributos de compreensão dos mesmos (e.g., Cabral, 2013).

Este trabalho segue a linha de investigação destes estudos, focando-se no Programa Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar, lançado em 2016,

pelo Ministério de Educação. Este programa assenta no princípio de que são as comunidades educativas quem melhor conhece os seus contextos, estando, por isso, mais bem preparadas para conceber planos de ação estratégica (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 23/2016, de 11 de abril). Assim, é lançado o desafio às escolas de, no âmbito da sua autonomia organizacional e pedagógica, conceberem e apresentarem planos de ação estratégica de melhoria das aprendizagens e do sucesso escolar. Neste âmbito, coube às escolas definirem um plano de ação com intencionalidade estratégica, designado de Plano de Ação Estratégica (PAE). O PAE define-se do seguinte modo:

instrumento que orienta e estrutura a operacionalização e concretização dos principais objetivos e prioridades do projeto educativo da escola e cuja elaboração requer um exercício participado de construção local que privilegia a dimensão incremental da ação na criação de dinâmicas educativas contextualizadas e adequadas à superação dos problemas educativos sinalizados. (Verdasca et al., 2019, p.xi)

Com efeito, interessa perceber de que modo as escolas responderam a este desafio, contribuindo para a compreensão da eficácia de medidas descentralizadas de promoção do sucesso educativo bem como para a consolidação de um modelo de ação estratégica em contexto educativo.

Problema de investigação, questões de investigação e estrutura da tese

Assinalamos anteriormente um conjunto de aspetos inerentes ao problema de investigação de base a este trabalho.

Em primeiro lugar, identificamos a centralidade da ação estratégica, em relação com a liderança, como fator de melhoria e eficácia das escolas (e.g.,

Costa, 2003; Costa, Mendes & Ventura, 2000; Davies, 2006a, 2007; Eacott, 2008ab, 2011; Quong & Walker, 2010; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014).

Em segundo lugar, verificamos que, apesar da relevância de que se reveste este tópico no âmbito da administração e organização escolares, o quadro teórico e empírico acerca da ação estratégica é limitado (Chan, 2018; Cheng, 2015; Eacott, 2011).

Em terceiro lugar, assinalamos brevemente a emergência de políticas educativas nacionais que justificam a ação estratégica no sentido da melhoria dos resultados dos alunos e da eficácia das escolas. No quadro político, a ação estratégica é referida explicitamente, relacionada com a autonomia das escolas, e perspetivando-se como motor de mudança e melhoria contextualizada (Barroso, 2018; Cabral, 2013; Machado, 2017; Verdasca et al., 2019).

Finalmente, questionamos se as políticas e as práticas nacionais em educação convergem com modelos de ação estratégica no sentido da promoção do sucesso escolar e da melhoria das escolas (Barroso, 2018; Cabral, 2013).

Considerando o exposto, este trabalho de doutoramento inscreve-se na linha de investigação acerca da ação estratégica nas escolas, procurando contribuir para a teoria, investigação e prática neste campo de estudo. Especificamente, procura compreender os processos de ação estratégica desenvolvidos nas escolas portuguesas, tendo em vista a melhoria dos resultados educativos e, por esta via, contribuir para a construção de um modelo de ação estratégica orientador das práticas em contexto educativo. Com efeito, não se pretende conhecer os impactos da autonomia progressivamente possibilitada às escolas através dos seus planos de ação, mas contribuir para o conhecimento dos processos de ação estratégica que configuram um melhor uso da autonomia organizacional e pedagógica nas escolas portuguesas. Este

estudo incide nos Planos de Ação Estratégica dos Agrupamentos de Escolas/Escolas não agrupadas, desenvolvidos no âmbito do Programa Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar promovido pelo Ministério de Educação.

Considerando o objeto e problema de investigação, formulamos a seguinte questão de investigação: Como se concretiza a ação das escolas portuguesas através de instrumentos operacionais de promoção do sucesso escolar como os Planos de Ação Estratégica? Daqui decorrem as seguintes subquestões: (i) Como se caracterizam os PAEs em termos de problemas de partida, objetivos, tipologia de ações e públicos-alvo, entre outros?; (ii) Como se concretizou o processo de planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs, designadamente quanto aos processos de tomada de decisão adotados?; (iii) Quais os indicadores de qualidade considerados no planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?; (iv) Quais os fatores críticos ao planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?

Em termos de estrutura, esta tese apresenta-se em formato tipo artigo, organizada em quatro capítulos, cada um dos quais correspondente a um artigo submetido em periódicos de relevância na área em estudo. Os artigos foram escritos em língua inglesa, pelo que os capítulos que aqui se apresentam, também se encontram escritos em língua inglesa.

O capítulo 1, *Strategy and strategic leadership in education: A scoping review*, consiste numa revisão de literatura, tipo *scoping review*, acerca dos aspetos chave da estratégia e da liderança estratégica em educação. Este tipo de revisão tem por objetivo mapear os conceitos-chave numa dada área de investigação bem como identificar as principais fontes e tipos de evidência

disponíveis, permitindo uma melhor sistematização dos dados existentes e a identificação de lacunas na literatura (Arksey & O'Malley's, 2005; Peters et al., 2015). Com efeito, este capítulo procura apresentar-se como uma leitura abrangente e integrada da investigação relevante acerca da ação estratégica e da liderança estratégica tendo o potencial de informar a investigação e a prática em educação. Para além da descrição da metodologia adotada para a realização da revisão de literatura, conforme o modelo de Arksey e O'Malley (2005), apresentam-se os resultados organizados em torno de 3 questões principais: (i) Como se define estratégia e liderança estratégica nas escolas?; (ii) Quais as principais características ou práticas da liderança estratégica nas escolas? e; (iii) Que variáveis se relacionam com a estratégia e a liderança estratégica nas escolas? Os dados sistematizados refletem o quadro teórico de suporte à investigação que levamos a cabo e as conclusões deste capítulo identificam possíveis linhas de ação para a investigação e para a prática.

O capítulo 2, *Strategic action plans for school improvement: An exploratory study about quality indicators for schools' plan evaluation*, centra-se na identificação de indicadores de qualidade para avaliação de planos de ação estratégica bem como no teste preliminar destes mesmos indicadores a partir dos PAEs das escolas portuguesas. Este estudo, de natureza exploratória e qualitativa, procurou compreender que indicadores de qualidade podem ser considerados na análise dos planos de ação das escolas portuguesas e, também, analisar as características principais dos PAEs em termos de qualidade. Partindo de um breve enquadramento teórico, e apresentados os procedimentos metodológicos, identificam-se os indicadores de qualidade desenhados a partir de 3 fontes principais de dados: (i) orientações do Ministério de Educação para a elaboração dos PAEs; (ii) análise preliminar do conteúdo

dos PAEs e; (iii) literatura científica acerca dos tópicos em estudo. Em seguida, apresentam-se os resultados da análise de conteúdo realizada, tomando como categorias os indicadores de qualidade identificados e conclui-se com implicações para a investigação e para a prática.

O capítulo 3, *What about us? Teachers' participation in school strategic action plans*, corresponde a um estudo de natureza quantitativa, que explora a participação dos professores nos processos de tomada de decisão e de planeamento estratégico nas escolas portuguesas. Feito um breve enquadramento teórico e apresentação da metodologia usada, apresentam-se os resultados relativos à participação dos professores nos PAEs das escolas, as diferenças de participação entre professores em função do sexo, habilitações académicas, anos de experiência e cargos de liderança, e a relação entre a participação dos professores nos PAEs e outras variáveis de processo relevantes em termos de ação estratégica. Discutem-se estes resultados e conclui-se com implicações para a prática e investigação.

O capítulo 4, *Planning for school improvement in Portuguese schools: Possibilities and challenges*, centra-se nos processos de planeamento e ação estratégica das escolas portuguesas. Utilizou-se uma metodologia de estudo de caso múltiplo, de tipo instrumental (Stake, 2003), explorando-se o modo como três escolas concretizaram o processo de elaboração, execução e monitorização dos respetivos PAEs. Foram identificados processos de ação estratégica, fatores críticos no planeamento e ação estratégicos e impactos percebidos dos planos na escola, nos profissionais e nos alunos. Discutem-se estes resultados e conclui-se com implicações para a prática e investigação.

Os estudos apresentados nos diferentes capítulos procuram responder de forma diferenciada, mas integrada, às questões de investigação, conforme se

apresenta na tabela 1. Na conclusão desta tese apresenta-se uma leitura integrada dos contributos teóricos e resultados dos diferentes estudos levados a cabo. Com efeito, são apresentadas as principais conclusões deste trabalho, identificados os seus contributos para a construção de um modelo de suporte à ação estratégica nas escolas portuguesas e discutidas as implicações para a investigação futura.

Tabela 1. Estudos realizados e questões de investigação

Estudo	Questões específicas de cada estudo	Questões de investigação	Como se concretiza a ação das escolas portuguesas através de instrumentos operacionais de promoção do sucesso escolar como os Planos de Ação Estratégica?	Como se concretiza a ação estratégica nas escolas? Contributos para a construção de modelo de ação estratégica nas escolas
Estudo 1. <i>Strategy and strategic leadership in education: A scoping review</i>	<p>E1.Q1. Como se define estratégia e liderança estratégica nas escolas?</p> <p>E1.Q2. Quais as principais características ou práticas da liderança estratégica nas escolas?</p> <p>E1.Q3. Que variáveis se relacionam com a estratégia e a liderança estratégica nas escolas?</p>	<p>Q3. Quais os indicadores de qualidade considerados no planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?</p> <p>Q4. Quais os fatores críticos ao planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?</p>		
Estudo 2. <i>Strategic action plans for school improvement: An exploratory study about quality indicators for schools' plan evaluation</i>	<p>E2.Q1. Que indicadores de qualidade podem ser considerados na análise dos planos de ação das escolas portuguesas?</p> <p>E2.Q2. Quais as características principais dos PAEs das escolas portuguesas em termos de qualidade?</p>	<p>Q1. Como se caracterizam os PAEs em termos de problemas de partida, objetivos, tipologia de ações e públicos-alvo, entre outros?</p> <p>Q3. Quais os indicadores de qualidade considerados no planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?</p>		
Estudo 3. <i>What about us? Teachers' participation in school strategic action plans</i>	<p>E3.Q1. Como é que os professores percebem a sua participação nos PAEs?</p> <p>E3.Q2. Existem diferenças na participação percebida dos professores nos PAEs em função do sexo, habilitações literárias, tempo de serviço e cargo de liderança?</p> <p>E3.Q3. A participação percebida dos professores nos PAEs relaciona-se com o conhecimento acerca dos PAEs, a sua natureza participativa, a importância e sentido de autoria atribuídos ao plano?</p>	<p>Q2. Como se concretizou o processo de planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs, designadamente quanto aos processos de tomada de decisão adotados?</p> <p>Q4. Quais os fatores críticos ao planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?</p>		
Estudo 4. <i>Planning for school improvement in Portuguese schools: Possibilities and challenges</i>	<p>E4.Q1. Como se concretiza o processo de planeamento, implementação e monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?</p> <p>E4.Q2. Quais os fatores críticos no planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?</p> <p>E4.Q3. Quais os impactos percebidos dos PAEs?</p>	<p>Q2. Como se concretizou o processo de planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs, designadamente quanto aos processos de tomada de decisão adotados?</p> <p>Q4. Quais os fatores críticos ao planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?</p>		

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Capítulo 1. Strategy and strategic leadership in education: A scoping review

Abstract

Strategy and strategic leadership are critical issues for school leaders. However, strategy as a field of research has largely been overlooked within the educational leadership literature. Most of the theoretical and empirical work on strategy and strategic leadership over the past decades has been related to non-educational settings, and scholarship devoted to these issues in education is still minimal. The purpose of this scoping review was to provide a comprehensive overview of relevant research regarding strategy and strategic leadership, identifying any gaps in the literature that could inform future research agendas and evidence for practice. The scoping review is underpinned by the five-stage framework of Arksey and O'Malley (2005). The results indicate that there is scarce literature about strategy and that timid steps have been made toward a more integrated and comprehensive model of strategic leadership. It is necessary to expand research into more complex, longitudinal, and explanatory ways due to a better understanding of these constructs.

Keywords: strategy, strategic leadership, schools, scoping review.

1.1. Introduction

Strategy and strategic leadership are critical issues for school leaders (Davies & Davies, 2006, 2010; Eacott, 2010a, 2011). However, strategy as a field of research has largely been overlooked in educational leadership literature (Eacott, 2008ab, 2011). Most of the theoretical and empirical work on strategy and strategic leadership over the past decades has been related to non-educational settings, and scholarship devoted to this issues in education is still very limited (Chan, 2018).

The concept of strategy appeared in educational management literature in the 1980s; however, little research was produced until the 1990s (Eacott, 2008b). Specific educational reforms led to large amounts of international literature mostly devoted to strategic planning (Eacott, 2007, 2008ab). For a long period of time, the concept of strategy was incomplete and confusing. The word 'strategy' was often used to characterise different kinds of actions, namely, to weight management activities, to describe a high range of leadership activities, to define planning or to report to individual actions within an organisation (Eacott, 2008a).

Strategy and strategic planning became synonymous (Eacott, 2008b). However, strategy and planning are different concepts, with strategy being more than the pursuit of a plan (Davies, 2003, 2006; Eacott, 2008ab; Quong & Walker, 2010). The work of Davies and colleagues (Davies, 2003, 2004; Davies & Davies, 2004, 2006, 2010) was essential and contributed to a shift in the rationale regarding strategy and strategic leadership. They developed a comprehensive framework for strategy in schools comprising strategic processes, approaches, and leadership. This model about strategic leadership was not seen as a new theory, but an element of all educational leadership and management theories

(Davies & Davies, 2010). Eacott (2008ab, 2010a, 2011) also contributed to a more integrative and alternate view of strategy and strategic leadership. The author problematised strategic leadership as a complex social activity, as it takes important historical, economic, technological, cultural, social, and political influences and challenges (Eacott, 2011). Nonetheless, there is scarce educational literature about this topic, despite the interest of scholars, practitioners, and politicians (Cheng, 2010; Eacott, 2011). After ten years of Eacott's analysis of literature on strategy in education, it seems that this educational construct is still overlooked.

This scoping review focuses on strategy and strategic leadership in the educational field. Despite the interest of a multidisciplinary vision of strategy and strategic leadership, we agree with Eacott (2008b) about the need for a meaningful definition of strategy and strategic leadership in education, as it is a field with its own specifications. A clear idea of what strategic leadership means and what theory or theories of strategic leadership support it are of great importance for research and practice. This scoping review is an attempt to contribute to a strategy-specific theory by continuing to focus on ways to appropriately develop specific theories about strategy and strategic leadership in the educational field, particularly focusing on school contexts.

1.2. Methods

A scoping review was employed based upon Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage framework complemented by the guidelines of other authors (Colquhoun et al., 2014; Khalil et al., 2016; Levac, Colquhoun & O'Brien, 2010; Peters et al., 2015). The five stages of Arksey and O'Malley's framework are (1) identifying the initial research questions, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) study

selection, (4) charting the data, and (5) collating, summarising and reporting the results. These five stages were utilised in this review of the strategy and strategic leadership literature. In the sections above, the process of this scoping review is presented.

1.2.1. Identifying the initial research questions

The focus of this review was to explore key aspects of strategy and strategic leadership in educational literature. The primary question that guided this research was: What is known about strategy and strategic leadership in schools? This question was subdivided into the following questions: How should strategy and strategic leadership in schools be defined?; What are the main characteristics of strategic leadership in schools?; What key variables are related to strategy and strategic leadership in schools?

1.2.2. Identifying relevant studies

As suggested by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), keywords for search were defined, and databases were selected. Key concepts and search terms were developed to capture literature related to strategy and strategic leadership in schools, considering international perspectives. Techniques for searching included the use of search tools, such as educational subject headings and Boolean operators to narrow, widen, and combine literature searches.

The linked descriptive key search algorithm that was developed to guide the search is outlined in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Key search algorithm

Search algorithm
(Strategy AND school)
(Strategic AND leadership)
(Strategic AND plan* AND school)
(Strategic AND action AND school)
(Strategically AND focused AND school)

Considering scoping review characteristics, time and resources available, inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed. Educational literature has reported the concepts of strategy and strategic leadership since the 1980s (Eacott, 2008ab). However, it gained expansion between 1990 and 2000 with studies flourishing mostly about strategic planning (Eacott, 2008b). Previous research argues that strategy is more than planning, taking note of the need to distinguish the concepts. Considering our focus on strategy and strategic leadership, studies about strategic planning were excluded. The period 1990 to 2019 was considered appropriate.

A full list of inclusion and exclusion criteria is outlined in Table 1.2.

The following six electronic databases were searched to identify peer-reviewed literature: ERIC, Education Source, Academic Search Complete, Science Direct, Emerland, and Web of Science. Additionally, a hand search of the reference lists of identified articles was undertaken, and Google Scholar was utilised to identify any other primary sources. The review of the literature was completed over two months, ending in August 2019.

Table 1.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Period	1990 to 2019	Studies outside these dates
Languages	English and Portuguese	Studies in other languages
Type of article	Original research, published in a peer-reviewed journal	Articles that are not peer-reviewed or original research
Study focus / Population and sample	Pre-university-level schools	Universities
Literature focus	Articles where the overwhelming theme relates to strategy and strategic leadership, including studies, reviews, and discussion papers	Articles that briefly refer or made no reference to strategic leadership Articles where the main focus is on planning or strategic planning

1.2.3 Study selection

With the key search descriptors, 1193 articles were identified. A screening of the titles, keywords, and abstracts revealed a large number of irrelevant articles, particularly those related to strategic planning (e.g., Agi, 2017; Al-Zboon & Hasan, 2012; Bennett, Crawford, Levačić, Glover & Earley, 2000; Schlebusch & Mokhatle, 2016) and with general ideas about leadership (e.g., Corral & Gámez, 2010; FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018). Articles that were primarily

associated with other topics and that only referred briefly to strategic leadership were excluded (e.g., Bandur, 2012; Malin & Hackmann, 2017).

A large number of articles were removed from the search, as they were duplicated in databases. A further number of articles were identified using Google Scholar. However, a significant number of these articles did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Guided by the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 231 studies were identified as being relevant to the research topic. From these studies, 67 were selected after screening for full-text access and analyses. Full-text versions of the articles were obtained, with each article being reviewed and confirmed as appropriate. This process provided an opportunity to identify any further additional relevant literature from a review of the reference lists of each article (backward reference search; n=2). Ultimately, both with database search and backward reference search, a total of 29 articles were included to be analysed in the scoping review. It is relevant to mention that this process of article selection followed the Preferred Reporting of Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Statement (Moher, Liberate, Tetzlaff, Altman & The PRISMA Group, 2009). Figure 1.1 illustrates the process of article selection.

As mentioned, during the process of study selection, several studies were excluded. Examples include studies related to strategic planning where the focus is on the planning processes (e.g., Agi, 2017; Al-Zboon & Hasan, 2012; Bennett et al., 2000; Schlebusch & Mokhatle, 2016), with general ideas about leadership (e.g., Corral & Gámez, 2010; FitzGerald, & Quiñones, 2018) and that were primarily associated with other topics (e.g. Bandur, 2012; Malin & Hackmann, 2017). Despite the interest of the topics for strategic action, we were interested in strategy, strategic leadership and its specific aspects.

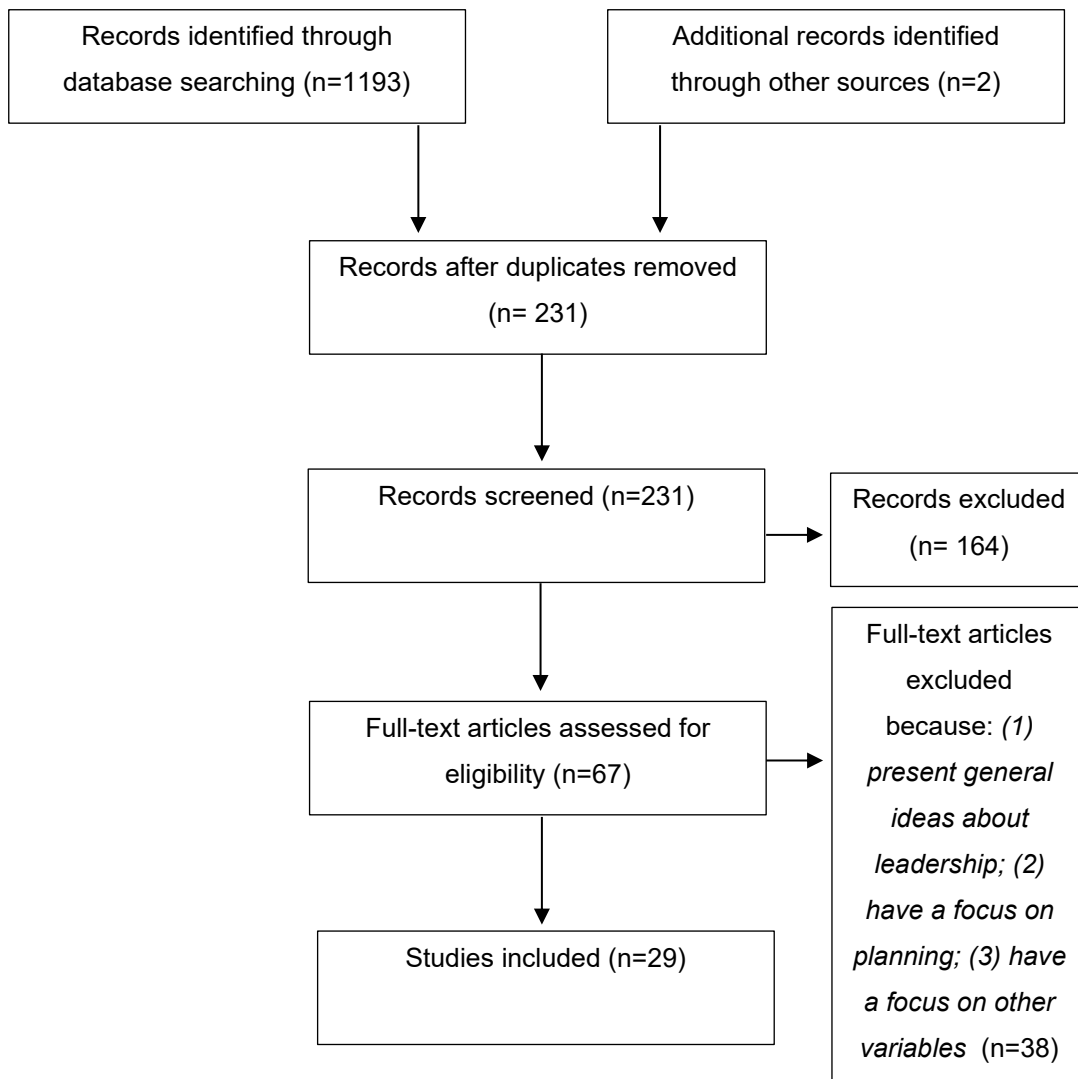


Figure 1.1. PRISMA chart outlining the study selection process.

1.2.4. Data charting and collation

The fourth stage of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) scoping review framework consists of charting the selected articles. Summaries were developed for each article related to the author, year, location of the study, participants, study methods, and a brief synthesis of study results related to our research questions. Details of included studies are provided in the table available in appendix 1.1.

1.2.5. Summarising and reporting findings

The fifth and final stage of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) scoping review framework summarises and reports findings as presented in the forward section.

1.3. Findings

This scoping review yielded 29 articles from eleven different countries (cf. Figure 1.2). The United Kingdom and Australia have the highest numbers of papers. There is a notable dispersion of literature in terms of the geographical distribution.

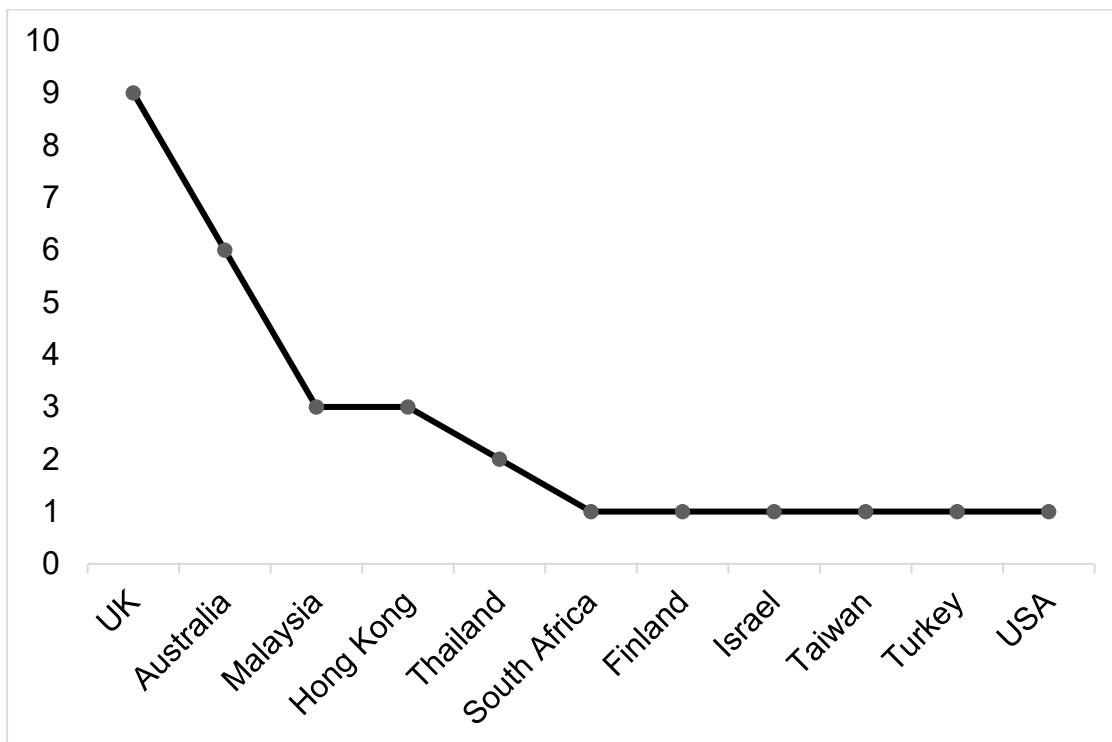


Figure 1.2. Number of papers per country

A large number of these articles were published by Brent Davies and colleagues (N=9) and Scott Eacott (N=6). Without question, these authors have influenced and shaped the theoretical grounding about strategy and strategic leadership. While Davies and colleagues have contributed to design a framework

of strategy and strategic leadership, influencing the emergence of other studies related to these topics, Eacott provided an essential contribution by exploring, systematising, and problematising the existing literature about these same issues. The other authors have published between one and two papers about these topics.

Seventeen papers are of conceptual or theoretical nature, and twelve are empirical research papers. The conceptual/theoretical papers analyse the concepts of strategy and strategic leadership, present a framework for strategic leadership, and discuss implications for leaders' actions. The majority of empirical studies are related to the skills, characteristics, and actions of strategic leaders. Other empirical studies explore relations between strategic leadership and other variables, such as collaboration, culture of teaching, organisational learning, and school effectiveness.

In the following section, we present the articles that were the focus of our initial research questions.

1.3.1. How should strategy and strategic leadership in schools be defined?

The concept of strategy is relatively new in educational literature. It is a construct that has been neglected; therefore, the knowledge about strategy and strategic leadership is incomplete and confusing (Eacott, 2008ab). The emergence of politics and reforms related to school autonomy and responsibility in terms of efficacy and accountability bring up to the educational literature the concept of strategy (Cheng, 2010; Eacott, 2008b). It first appeared in the 1980s but gained impulse between 1990 and 2000. However, the main focus of the literature was on strategic planning based upon mechanistic or technical-rational

models of strategy. Authors have criticised the conceptualisation of strategy as a way for elaborating a specific plan of action for schools (Davies, 2003, 2006; Eacott, 2008ab; Quong & Walker, 2010). These same authors adopted a more comprehensive and holistic model of strategy. Davies (2003) defined strategy as *a specific pattern of decisions and actions taken to achieve an organization's goals* (p. 295). This concept of strategy entails some specific aspects, mainly that strategy implies a broader view incorporating data about a specific situation or context (Davies, 2003, 2006, 2007; Dimmock & Walker, 2004). It is a *broad organizational-wide perspective*, supported by *a vision and direction setting*, that conceals longer-term views with short ones (Davies, 2003, 2006, 2007; Dimmock & Walker, 2004). It can be seen as a *template for short-term action*. However, it deals mostly with medium- and longer-term views of *three- to five-year perspectives* (Davies, 2003, 2006, 2007). In this sense, a strategy is much more a perspective or a way of thinking that frames strategically successful schools (Davies, 2003, 2006; Davies & Davies, 2005, 2010).

Eacott (2008a) has argued that strategy in the educational leadership context is a field of practice and application that is of a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary nature. More than a single definition of strategy, what is needed is a conceptual understanding and articulation of its fundamental features, what removes the need to answer, "what is a strategy?". Understanding strategy as *choosing a direction within a given context, through leadership, and articulating that direction through management practices* (Eacott, 2008a, p. 356) brings to the arena diverse elements of strategy from both leadership and management. From this alternative point of view, a strategy may be seen as leadership (Eacott, 2010a). More than an answer to "what is a strategy?", it is crucial to understand "when and how does the strategy exist?" (Eacott, 2010a), removing the focus on

leaders' behaviours and actions per se to cultural, social, and political relationships (Eacott, 2011). Hence, research strategy and strategic leadership oblige acknowledging the broader educational, societal, and political contexts (Dimmock & Walker, 2004; Eacott, 2010ab, 2011).

Strategic leadership is a critical component in school development (Davies & Davies, 2006). However, to define leadership is challenging considering the amount of extensive, diverse literature about this issue. Instead of presenting a new categorisation about leadership, the authors most devoted to strategic leadership consider it as a key dimension of any activity of leadership (Davies & Davies, 2004, 2006; Eacott, 2010a, 2011). Barron, Henderson, and Newman (1995) stressed the idea of change. As mentioned by the authors, *implementation of strategic leadership means change: change in thinking, change in the way schools are organized, change in management styles, change in distribution of power, change in teacher education programs, and change in roles of all participants* (Barron, Henderson & Newman, 1995, p. 180). Strategic leadership is about creating a vision, setting the direction of the school over the medium- to longer-term and translating it into action (Davies & Davies, 2010; Eacott, 2011). In that sense, strategic leadership is a *new way* of thinking (Barron, Henderson & Newman, 1995) that determines a dynamic and iterative process of functioning in schools (Eacott, 2008b).

In their model of strategic leadership, Davies and Davies (2006) consider that leadership must be based on strategic intelligence, summarised as three types of wisdom: (1) people wisdom, which includes participation and sharing information with others, developing creative thinking and motivation, and developing capabilities and competencies within the school; (2) contextual wisdom, which comprises understanding and developing school culture, sharing

values and beliefs, developing networks, and understanding external environment; and (3) procedural wisdom, which consists of the continuous cycle of learning, aligning, timing and acting. This model also includes strategic processes and strategic approaches that authors define as the *centre on this cycle* (Davies & Davies, 2006, p. 136).

To deeply understand strategic leadership, it is necessary to explore strategic processes and approaches that leaders take (Davies & Davies, 2010). In this sense, strategic leadership, strategic processes, and strategic approaches are key elements for sustainable and successful schools, which are found to be strategically focused schools. Davies (2006) designed a model for a strategically focused school that may be defined as one *that is educationally effective in the short-term but also has a clear framework and processes to translate core moral purpose and vision into an excellent educational provision that is challenging and sustainable in the medium- to long-term* (p.11). This model incorporates (1) strategic processes (conceptualisation, engagement, articulation, and implementation), (2) strategic approaches (strategic planning, emergent strategy, decentralised strategy, and strategic intent), and (3) strategic leadership (organisational abilities and personal characteristics). Based on these different dimensions, strategically focused schools have *built-in sustainability, develop set strategic measures to assess their success, are restless, are networked, use multi-approach planning processes, build the strategic architecture of the school, are strategically opportunistic, deploy strategy in timing and abandonment and sustain strategic leadership* (Davies, 2004, pp.22-26).

1.3.2. What are the main characteristics of strategic leadership in schools?

Davies and Davies (Davies, 2003; Davies & Davies, 2005, 2006, 2010) discuss what strategic leaders do (organisational abilities) and what characteristics strategic leaders display (personal characteristics). The key activities of strategic leaders, or organisational abilities, are (1) create a vision and setting a direction, (2) translate strategy into action, (3) influence and develop staff to deliver the strategy, (4) balance the strategic and the operational, (5) determine effective intervention points (*what, how, when, what not to do and what to give up*), (6) develop strategic capabilities, and (7) define measures of success (Davies & Davies, 2006, 2010). The main characteristics that strategic leaders display, or their personal characteristics, are (1) dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present, (2) absorptive capacity, (3) adaptive capacity, and (4) wisdom.

Two specific studies explored the strategic leadership characteristics of Malaysian leaders (Ali, 2012, 2018), considering the above-mentioned model as a framework. For Malaysian Quality National Primary School Leaders, the results supported three organisational capabilities (strategic orientation, translation, and alignment) and three individual characteristics of strategic leadership (dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present, absorptive capacity, and adaptive capacity). For Malaysian vocational college educational leaders, the results were consistent with seven distinct practices of strategic leadership, such as strategic orientation, strategic alignment, strategic intervention, restlessness, absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and leadership wisdom.

Other studies were also focused on the characteristics of strategic leadership with different populations and countries. Chatchawaphun, Julsuwan, and Srisa-ard (2016) identified principles, attributes, and skills of strategic leadership of secondary school administrators from Thailand. The principles identified within the sample of principals included appropriate values, modern

visionary, future focusing strategy, empirical evidence focus, intention toward accomplishment, decency, and making relationships. The attributes found were strategic learning, strategic thinking, and value push up. The skills were learning, interpretation, forecasting, planning, challenge, and decision making. Chan (2018) explored strategic leadership practices performed by Hong Kong school leaders of early childhood education and identified effective planning and management, reflective and flexible thinking, and networking and professional development as variables. Eacott (2010c) investigated the strategic role of Australian public primary school principals concerning the leader characteristics of tenure (referring to the time in years in their current substantive position) and functional track (referring to the time in years spent at different levels of the organisational hierarchy). These demographic variables have moderating effects on the strategic leadership and management of participants. These five studies seem to be outstanding contributions to solidify a framework of strategic leadership and to test it with different populations in different countries.

Additionally, Quong and Walker (2010) present seven principles for effective and successful strategic leaders. Strategic leaders are future-oriented and have a future strategy, their practices are evidence-based and research-led, they get things done, open new horizons, are fit to lead, make good partners and do the 'next' right thing — these seven principles of action seem related to the proposal of Davies and colleagues. Both authors highlighted visions for the future, future long-term plans and plans' translation into action as important characteristics of strategic leaders.

One other dimension that is being explored in research relates to ethics. Several authors assert that insufficient attention and research have been given to aspects related to moral or ethical leadership among school leaders (Glanz,

2010; Kangaslahti, 2012; Quong & Walker, 2010). The seventh principle of the Quong and Walker (2010) model of strategic leadership is that leaders do the "next" right thing. In fact, this relates to the ethical dimension of leadership, meaning that strategic leaders recognise the importance of ethical behaviours and act accordingly. For some authors, ethics in strategic leadership is a critical issue for researchers and practitioners that needs to be taken into consideration (Glanz, 2010; Quong & Walker, 2010). Glanz (2010) underlined social justice and caring perspectives as required to frame strategic initiatives. Kangaslahti (2012) analysed the strategic dilemmas that leaders face in educational settings (cf. table 1.3) and how they can be tackled by dilemma reconciliation.

Table 1.3. Nine dilemmas of school leaders (Kangaslahti, 2012)

Top-down strategy vs. Bottom-up strategy process
Leadership by authority vs. Staff empowerment
Strategic leadership vs. Operative management
Focus on administration vs. Focus on pedagogy
Materialistic values vs. Human values
Serving customers and satisfying their needs vs. Educating and teaching pupils
Secret planning and decision making vs. Open, transparent organisation
Competition and specialisation schools vs. Networking and cooperation of schools
Well-being of pupils vs. Well-being of staff

Chen (2008), in case study research, explored the conflicts that school administrators have confronted in facilitating school reform in Taiwan. The author identified four themes related to strategic leadership in coping with the conflicts accompanying this school reform: (1) educational values, (2) timeframe for change, (3) capacity building, and (4) community involvement. These studies reinforce the idea that school improvement and success seem to be influenced by the way leaders think strategically and deal with conflicts or dilemmas.

Researchers need to design ethical frameworks or models from which practitioners can think ethically about their strategic initiatives and their dilemmas or conflicts (Chen, 2008; Glanz, 2010; Kangaslahti, 2012).

Despite the critical contribution of Davies' models (2003, 2004; Davies & Davies, 2006, 2010) and subsequent works, Eacott (2010a) questions the production of lists of behaviours and traits. This is likely one of the main differences between Davies' and Eacott's contributions in this field. While Davies and colleagues include organisational abilities and personal characteristics in their model of strategic leadership, Eacott (2010ab) emphasises the broader context where strategy occurs. These ideas, however, are not concurrent but complementary in the comprehension of strategy as leadership in education since both authors present a comprehensive and integrated model of strategic leadership. Even though Davies and colleagues present some specific characteristics of leaders, they are incorporated into a large model for strategy in schools.

1.3.3. What are other key variables related to strategy and strategic leadership in schools?

Other studies investigated the relationship between strategic leadership and other key variables, such as collaboration (Ismail, Kanesan & Muhammad, 2018), the culture of teaching (Khumalo, 2018), organisational learning (Aydin, Guclu & Pisapia, 2015) and school effectiveness (Prasertcharoensuk & Tang, 2017).

One descriptive survey study presented teacher collaboration as a mediator of strategic leadership and teaching quality (Ismail, Kanesan & Muhammad, 2018). The authors argue that school leaders who demonstrate

strategic leadership practices can lead to the creation of collaborative practices among teachers and thus help to improve the professional standards among them, namely, teaching quality (Ismail, Kanesan & Muhammad, 2018). One cross-sectional study identified positive and significant relations among the variables of strategic leadership actions and organisational learning. Transforming, political, and ethical leadership actions were identified as significant predictors of organisational learning. However, managing actions were not found to be a significant predictor (Aydin, Guclu, & Pisapia, 2015). One other study establishes that strategic leadership practices promote culture of teaching, defined as the commitment through quality teaching for learning outcomes (Khumalo, 2018). These three studies provide essential highlights of the relevance of strategic leadership for school improvement and quality. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that in a research survey that examined the effect of leadership factors of administrators on school effectiveness, the authors concluded that the direct, indirect, and overall effects of the administrators' strategic leadership had no significant impact on school effectiveness (Prasertcharoensuk & Tang, 2017), contradicting other studies about leadership practices (e.g., Day et al., 2009; Hopkins, Stringfield, Harris, Stoll & Mackay, 2014). Such studies stimulate researchers to explore this and other factors that relate to strategic leadership.

1.4. Conclusion

With this scoping review, the authors aimed to contribute to enduring specific theories about strategy and strategic leadership in education. The concepts have been developed from a more rational and mechanistic view related to planning processes to a more comprehensive and complex view of strategy

and leadership that take into consideration a situated and contextual framework. In that sense, Eacott (2010a) defined strategy as leadership. So, what are the main characteristics of strategic leaders in schools? From the literature reviewed, specific abilities, behaviours and other characteristics may be identified. For example, Davies and Davies (2006, 2005, 2010) proposed a model with organisational abilities and personal characteristics of school leaders. However, the discussion here is if it is really worthwhile to produce lists of behaviours and traits for strategic leaders in the absence of an integrated model that acknowledges the broader educational, societal and political context (Dimmock & Walker, 2004; Eacott, 2010ab, 2011). Without a comprehensive and contextual model of strategy and strategic leadership, supported by research, the topics may still be overlooked and misunderstood. Eacott (2011) argues that *strategy, as constructed through analysis, is decontextualized and dehumanized and essentially a vacuous concept with limited utility to the practice that it seeks to explain* (p. 426).

From our findings, it appears that this issue is being little explored. Despite the important contributions of authors cited in this scoping review (Ali, 2018; Aydin, Guclu & Pisapia, 2015; Chatchawaphun, Julsuwan & Srisa-ard, 2016; Chan, 2018; Ismail, Kanesan & Muhammad, 2018; Khumalo, 2018; Prasertcharoensuk & Tang, 2017), minor advances seem to have been made after 2010. This is intriguing taking into account the leaders' role in the *third wave of educational reform*, where strategic leadership pursues a new vision and new aims for education due to maximising learning opportunities for students through '*triplisation in education*' (i.e., as an integrative process of globalisation, localisation and individualisation in education) (Cheng, 2010, p. 48). It was expected that research moved from rational planning models towards a more

complex view of strategy in education (Eacott, 2011). This review brings the idea that some timid and situated steps have been made.

Since the important review by Eacott, published in 2008, a step forward was made in the distinction between strategy and planning. Despite the significant number of papers about planning that were found during this review, the majority were published before 2008 (e.g., Beach & Lindahl, 2004; Bell, 2004; Bennett et al., 2000; Broadhead, Hodgson, Cuckle & Dunford, 1998; Nebgen, 1990). In addition, most of the papers selected adopt a more integrative, comprehensive and complex view of strategy and strategic leadership (e.g., Ali, 2012, 2018; Chan, 2018; Davies & Davies, 2010; Eacott, 2010ab, 2011). More than identifying the "best of" for strategy and strategic leadership, alternate models understand strategy as a *way of thinking* (Davies & Davies, 2010) and a *work in progress* (Eacott, 2011).

It is time to expand the research into more complex, longitudinal, and explanatory ways due to a better understanding of the constructs. This scoping review was an attempt to contribute to this endeavour by integrating and systematising educational literature about strategy and strategic leadership.

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Apendix 1.1. Data charting and collation

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
1	1995, USA	Barron, B. Henderson, M. & Newman, P.	Propose a theoretical and operational definition of strategic leadership.	-	-	Authors define strategic leadership as a style of leadership, demonstrated by the individual who possesses skills to create and communicate vision and effect improvement in outcomes in elementary and secondary schools. The strategic leader serves as an agent for positive change in schools and school systems.
2	2003, UK	Davies, B.	Discuss the strategic leadership concept.	-	-	The author presents the concept of strategy (a specific pattern of decisions and actions taken to achieve an organization's goals) and analyzes different models of strategy (strategic planning, emergent strategy, intrapreneurship, and strategic intent) as complementary and necessary. He also presents characteristics of strategic leaders and some highlights of the creation of a strategically focused school.
3	2004, UK	Davies, B.	Present the concept of strategically focused schools.	-	-	The author presents the model of strategic leadership consubstantiated in three dimensions: (1) strategic processes (conceptualization processes, people interaction and development processes, articulation processes, and implementation processes), (2) strategic approaches strategic planning (emergent strategy, intrapreneurship and strategic intent) and, (3) strategically focused schools (build in sustainability, set strategic measures to assess their success, be restless, be networked, use multi-approach planning processes, build the strategic architecture of the school, be strategic opportunistic,

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
						be strategic in timing and abandonment and sustain strategic leadership).
4	2004, UK	Davies, B. & Davies, B.	Explore the nature of strategic leadership and assess whether a framework can be established to map the dimensions of strategic leadership	-	-	The authors present a model of strategic leadership with organizational abilities and individual characteristics. Strategic leaders have the organizational ability to be strategically orientated, translate strategy into action, align people and organizations, determine effective strategic intervention points, and develop strategic competencies. Strategic leaders display a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present, absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and wisdom.
5	2004, UK	Dimmock, C. & Walker, A.	Provide a critical analysis of the strategic leadership concept and introduce a more holistic, comprehensive, and culturally sensitive approach.	-	-	This article expresses several concerns about strategic leadership and argues that strategic leadership is predicated on a capacity for a whole-school design for improvement. Leaders formulate their holistic school designs and exercise strategic leadership around a coherent set of values and the following key features: learning for all as the centerpiece of the design; connectivity and consistency between the elements of the school in order to achieve synergy; an iterative and backward-mapping process that secures alignment between shorter-term flexibility and responsiveness, and the longer-term design blueprint; and the reflection of, and responsiveness to, social-cultural context, increasingly important in contemporary multiethnic communities.

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
6	2005, UK	Davies, B. & Davies, B.	Investigate good practice in strategic development.	23 participants	Case studies	The authors present the strategic dimension of leadership by using two major categories, which are: (1) what strategic leaders do (direction setting, translating strategy into action, enabling the staff to develop and deliver the strategy, determining effective intervention points and developing strategic capabilities) and (2) characteristics that strategic leaders display (strategic leaders have a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present, prioritize their strategic thinking and learning, create mental models to frame their understanding and practice and have powerful personal and professional networks. Based on that, the paper presents a model for strategic leadership that includes three types of wisdom: a people wisdom, contextual wisdom, and procedural wisdom.
7	2006, UK	Davies, B.	Explore the strategic processes for a strategically focused school.	-	-	The article explores the next strategic processes: (1) strategic conversations; (2) participation; (3) motivation and (4) strategic capability.
8	2006, UK	Davies, B. & Davies, B.	Discuss the strategic dimension of leadership and present a model for strategic leadership.	-	-	The authors present the strategic dimension of leadership by using two major categories, which are: (1) what strategic leaders do (direction setting, translating strategy into action, enabling the staff to develop and deliver the strategy, determining effective intervention points and developing strategic capabilities) and (2) characteristics that strategic leaders display (strategic leaders have a

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
						dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present, prioritize their strategic thinking and learning, create mental models to frame their understanding and practice and have powerful personal and professional networks. Based on that, the paper presents a model for strategic leadership that includes three types of wisdom: a people wisdom, contextual wisdom, and procedural wisdom.
9	2007, UK	Davies, B.	Present and discuss the concept of sustainable leadership and the nine factors that the author have been drawn from the research of sustainable and strategically successful schools.	-	-	The author identified nine sustainable leadership factors: (1) Outcomes not just outputs, (2) Balancing short- and long-term objectives, (3) Processes not plans, (4) Passion, (5) Personal humility and professional will, (6) Strategic timing and strategic abandonment, (7) Building capacity and creating involvement, (8) Developing strategic measures of success; (9) Building in sustainability.
10	2008, Taiwan	Chen, P.	Explore the conflicts that school administrators have confronted in facilitating school reform; Analyze the strategic and innovative leadership practices that have facilitated	15 participants	Case study (site visits, interviews, formal school documents, and the principal's written essays)	This study revealed 4 themes of strategic leadership in coping with the conflicts accompanying school reform in Taiwan: (1) educational values, (2) timeframe for change, (3) capacity building, and (4) community involvement.

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
			improvements in school effectiveness in Taiwan.			
11	2008a, Australia	Eacott, S.	Examine knowledge of strategy within the field of educational administration.	-	-	The study examines the context of educational administration, the evolution of strategy as an educational construct, its definition, and need within educational administration. Using this information, the author identifies key conceptual and methodological issues in current research.
12	2008b, Australia	Eacott, S.	Examine contemporary literature on strategy in education by an integrative and analytical manner	-	-	The study examines the context of educational administration, the evolution of strategy as an educational construct, its definition, and need within educational administration. Using this information, the author identifies key conceptual and methodological issues in current research.
13	2010, Hong Kong	Cheng, Y.	Propose a typology of three-wave models for conceptualizing and analyzing the diversities in strategic leadership	-	-	Based on different models and their related paradigms in education and reforms, the author proposes that strategic leadership can be classified as internal strategic leadership, interface strategic leadership, and future strategic leadership.
14	2010, UK	Davies, B. & Davies, B.	Provide an understanding of the nature and dimensions of strategic leadership.	-	-	The authors review processes and approaches of strategic leadership. They also examine the personal attributes of strategic leaders and the activities they undertake. Strategic leaders are considered strategic thinkers, strategic learners, and values-driven. Strategic leaders create the vision and future direction

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
						of the school, exert strategic influence, are strategic talent developers, balance the strategic and the operational, deliver strategic action, and define strategic measures of success.
15	2010a, Australia	Eacott, S.	Discuss and debate the quest of advancing our understanding of what it means to be strategic.	-	-	The author discuss the concept of strategy and present new conceptualisation for it. He defines strategy as leadership as it puts social practice back into educational leadership.
16	2010b, Australia	Eacott, S.	Investigate how practicing school principals and the literature construct the concept of strategy.	36 participants	Qualitative analysis of principals interviews and systematic search of peer-reviewed journal articles	Results indicate a poor match between practitioners and the literature in how they portray the strategic role of school leaders challenges scholars and practitioners alike to reconsider the conceptualization of strategy.
17	2010c, Australia	Eacott, S.	Investigate the strategic role of the public primary school principal concerning the leader characteristics of tenure and functional track.	77 principals; 186 other raters from principals' schools.	Static/cross-sectional questionnaire-based study on a convenience sample of public primary school	Both tenure and functional track matter to school leadership, and particularly the strategic dimension.

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
					principals in NSW, Australia	
18	2010, Israel	Glanz, J.	Discuss the dimension of ethics in strategic leadership.	-	-	This paper analyses critically the concept and discuss the importance of the dimension of ethics.
19	2010, Hong Kong	Quong, T. & Walker, A.	Explore what effective and successful strategic leaders do and describe this in terms of seven principles.	-	-	Authors present seven principles for effective and successful strategic leaders: (1) Strategic Leaders are Futures Oriented and have a Futures Strategy, (2) Strategic Leaders are Evidence-Based, and Research Led, (3) Strategic Leaders Get Things Done, (4) Strategic Leaders Open New Horizons, (5) Strategic Leaders are Fit to Lead, (6) Strategic Leaders Make Good Partners and (7) Strategic Leaders Do the 'Next' Right Thing.
20	2011, Australia	Eacott, S.	Propose an alternate theoretical frame for strategy in educational leadership.	-	-	Using Bourdieu's conceptualization of strategies for data analysis and discussion, the author proposes an alternate frame of strategy that takes into account the various social, political, historical and cultural forces which seek to influence the behavior of both leaders and schools.
21	2012, Finland	Kangaslahti, J.	Map strategic dilemmas.	648 participants	Action research	The author identified nine dilemmas. The research also concluded that successful strategic leadership involves identifying dilemmas now and in the future and tackling these with the help of a never-ending process of dilemma reconciliation.
22	2012, Malaysia	Ali, Hairuddin Mohd	Examine the strategic leadership	600 senior management	Survey method	The study provides information on the status of the strategic leadership characteristics among the

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
			<p>characteristics for the Malaysian Quality National Primary School Leaders (QNPSL) involved in the Quality School Improvement Program (QSIP), based on a nine-point model of strategic leadership, which combines five organizational capabilities and four individual characteristics of the strategic leaders (Davies and Davies, 2006, 2009);</p> <p>Examine which strategic leadership characteristics for the QNPSL represent the strategic leadership characteristics of the Malaysian QNPSL.</p>	<p>team members from 150 schools</p>	<p>approach; Research confirmatory;</p>	<p>Malaysian QNPSL for the QSIP. This study supported three organizational capabilities (strategic orientation, translation, and alignment) and three individual characteristics of strategic leadership (dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present, absorptive capacity, and adaptive capacity). The study did not support the presence of strategic intervention, strategic competence, and leadership wisdom.</p>
23	2015, Turkey	Aydin, M., Guclu, N., & Pisapia, J.	<p>Investigate the relationship between public and</p>	606 teachers	Cross-sectional survey design	<p>The descriptive results showed that in both public and private schools, the school principals use ethical actions most frequently.</p>

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
			private primary school principals' strategic leadership actions (SLA) and organizational learning (OL).			The findings also illustrated that there were positive and significant relations among the variables of SLA and OL. Transforming, political, and ethical leadership actions were the significant predictors of OL. However, managing actions were not found to be a significant predictor. We concluded that the teachers' perceptions of OL increase as the school principals use SLA more frequently.
24	2016, Thailand	Chatchawaphun, P., Julsuwan, S. & Srisa-ard, B.	Study principles, attributes, and skills needed for secondary school administrators; Investigate current situations, desirable conditions, and needs for strategic secondary school administrators; Develop a strategic secondary school administrator enhancement program; Explore the efficiency level of the strategic secondary school administrator	405 participants (experts, directors, deputy directors, and heads)	Sampling and data collection took 4 steps using a mixed method of research	This study identified principles, attributes, and skills for the strategic leadership of the secondary school administrators. The principles identified were appropriate values, modern visionary, future focusing strategy, empirical evidence focus, intention toward accomplishment, decency, and making relationships. The attributes were strategic learning, strategic thinking, and value push up. The skills were learning, interpretation, forecasting, planning, challenge, and decision making. The program of strategic leadership for secondary school administrators consisted of 3 modules as module 1 principles of strategic leadership, module 2 strategic leadership attributes, and module 3 strategic leadership skills. The application of the program showed that the participants receiving the development for the secondary school administrators' enhancement program had higher strategic

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
			enhancement program by using the developmental research process.			leadership after the development than before, and managed the school more efficiently.
25	2017, Hong Kong	Chan, C.	Explore strategic leadership practices that Hong Kong school leaders of early childhood education are performing; Develop an instrument for the measurement of strategic leadership in kindergarten education in Hong Kong contexts.	104 participants (principals, deputy principals, and senior teachers)	Quantitative questionnaire survey	This study indicates that there is a three-factor structure for the variables of strategic leadership in Hong Kong kindergartens (effective planning and management, reflective and flexible thinking, and networking and professional development). The abilities to exercise sound planning and management in school, leaders' reflective, flexible, and systems thinking and their willingness in continuous professional and network development are crucial to leading kindergartens in Hong Kong. This study also indicates that leaders' contextual intelligence is essential for exercising strategic leadership.
26	2017, Thailand	Prasertcharoensuk, T. & Tang, K.	Examine the effect of strategic leadership factors of administrators on school effectiveness.	510 participants (administrators and teachers)	Research survey	The results revealed that administrators showed a high level of strategic leadership behavior in their administration, but the overall school effectiveness was at a moderate level. Also, the findings indicated that all the comparisons of either the strategic leadership of administrators or school effectiveness were significantly different according to school size, respectively. Furthermore, a structural equation model of strategic leadership factors affecting school effectiveness was fitted. Finally, the direct effect, indirect effect, and overall effect of the administrators'

N.º	Year, Location	Author details	Aims/Purpose	Participants (if applicable)	Methodology/ Methods (if applicable)	Key findings
						strategic leadership had no significant impact on school effectiveness at the .05 level.
27	2018, Malaysia	Ali, Hairuddin Mohd	Conceptualize, validate, and confirm a structural equation modeling (SEM) hypothesized model of strategic leadership practices of Malaysian vocational college educational leaders.	500 educational leaders of 65 Malaysian vocational colleges	Quantitative survey approach	The responses to the survey items were consistent with seven distinct practices of strategic leadership, such as strategic orientation, strategic alignment, strategic intervention, restlessness, absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and leadership wisdom. The use of SEM procedures had confirmed that the hypothesized model of strategic leadership practices for Malaysian vocational college educational leaders was empirically valid and reliable.
28	2018, Malaysia	Ismail, S., Kanesan, A. & Muhammad, F.	Determine whether teacher collaboration is a mediator of the strategic leadership and teaching quality in schools	300 teachers from five high prestige secondary schools.	A descriptive survey using the multiple regression method	The findings of this study show that teacher collaboration is a mediator of strategic leadership and teaching quality. The school leaders who demonstrate the strategic leadership practices in schools can lead to the creation of collaborative practice among teachers and thus help to improve the professional standards among them, namely teaching quality. When the teaching quality can be enhanced, the student's academic achievement will probably increase.
29	2018, Africa	Khumalo, S.	Investigate how strategic school leadership promotes the culture of teaching in schools.	-	-	This article concludes that principals who exhibit strategic leadership practices promote the culture of teaching in both primary and secondary schools.

**Capítulo 2. Strategic action plans
for school improvement: An
exploratory study about quality
indicators for schools' plan
evaluation**

Abstract

Several school reforms in different parts of the world have mandated formal planning as a mean for improvement. However, the widespread use of plans has not been accompanied by evidence about schools' strategic plan quality. Thus, it is important to deepen the knowledge about high-quality school strategic processes as well as to design models that support planning processes considering relevant quality indicators. This study aimed to identify quality indicators for schools' plans evaluation in the Portuguese context and to test its usage. A grid with quality indicators for schools' plans analysis was designed based on different sources (preliminary content analysis of the plans of Portuguese schools, national guidelines, and educational literature). Nine quality indicators were included and guided the content analyses of the 663 strategic action plans of the Portuguese schools. Results indicated that plans lack relevant dimensions of quality, such as a comprehensive nature that integrates needs and solutions in a data-based process supported on evidence or research-based options. School plans consider indicators related to problem identifications, aims, and solutions. However, plans are much more description or a list of actions than a document that supports the strategic action of a given school. The results of this exploratory study point to significant challenges for policymakers and school leaders. It

also has relevant implications for future research related to school improvement.

Keywords: strategy, strategic planning, quality indicators, qualitative study.

2.1. Introduction

School improvement is a central aim of educational systems and a core concept in educational literature research (Hajisoteriou, Karousiou & Angelides, 2018; Harris, Adams, Jones & Muniandy, 2015; Leithwood, Jantzi & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006). Strategic planning and strategic action have been identified as valuable frameworks for school improvement (e.g., Davies, 2006, 2007; Quong & Walker, 2010; Eacott, 2008, 2011; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014). Research suggests that plan quality is related to plan implementation and, ultimately, to student achievement outcomes (e.g., Fernandez, 2011; Strunk, Marsh, Bush-Mecenas & Duque, 2016).

Moreover, several studies have identified strategic planning as a tool for school improvement (Dunaway, Kim & Szad, 2012; Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014; Meyers & Hitt, 2018; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019; Quong & Walker, 2010; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014). School reforms in different parts of the world have mandated formal planning to support improvement (Agi, 2017; Al-Zboon & Hasan, 2012; Schlebusch & Mokhatle, 2016; Strunk et al., 2016). However, planning is not always informed by evidence about schools' strategic plans' quality (e.g., Chukwumah, 2015; Fernandez, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2006; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019; Strunk et al., 2016).

Indeed, school planning *per se* is not a guarantee of school improvement or even strategic action. Prevalent planning practices in schools are short-term, usually based on the immediate needs of the school (Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014), and the focus has been the accomplishment of externally driven requirements (Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019). In terms of structure, plans seem to be quite similar, typically with a listing of goals and strategies (Meyers & Hitt, 2018). These characteristics do not guarantee an intentional and strategic action in schools.

Thus, it is important to deepen the knowledge about what the planning and implementing processes for high-quality school strategic plans are.

Key known indicators of high-quality plans for school improvement can be derived from educational literature (e.g., Bellei, Vanni, Valenzuela & Contreras, 2016; Dunaway, Kim & Szad, 2012; Fernandez, 2011; Hopkins, Stringfield, Harris, Stoll & Mackay, 2014; Immordino, Gigliotti, Ruben & Tromp, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2006; Strunk et al., 2016). The comprehensive and integrated nature of the plans, its alignment with school vision, mission and priorities, the option for research-based strategies, a well-defined plan considering goals and implementation, a clear definition of a data-based and monitoring process, the community involvement and the provision of professional development opportunities may be regarded as relevant indicators for quality school plans evaluation (e.g., Dunaway, Kim & Szad, 2012; Fernandez, 2011; Immordino et al., 2016; Strunk et al., 2016).

Previous research has focused on the processes for school improvement, taking into account, for example, the diverse school trajectories (e.g., Hopkins et al., 2014; Leithwood et al., 2006). Other studies aimed to evaluate school plans in terms of quality considering specific indicators (e.g., Chukwumah, 2015; Fernandez, 2011; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019; Strunk et al., 2016). This study is focused on quality indicators of school plans to identify adequate indicators to characterize plans in terms of quality in Portuguese schools.

2.2. Method

2.2.1. Data context

In resemblance to other countries, in Portugal, several school reform policies have mandated formal planning. For instance, quite recently, Portuguese schools were asked to elaborate and implement Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) for students' success improvement (Ministry of Education, 2016). With this initiative, Portuguese schools were invited to apply for financial support, with a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for academic success. SAP is defined as a tool to guide and structure actions related to the plan aims. Therefore, it is important to analyze schools' plans' characteristics in Portuguese schools taking into consideration quality indicators, which is the focus of the present study. A total of 663 Portuguese schools SAPs were approved for financial support, and all of these SAPs were collected, analyzed, and interpreted in this study.

2.2.2. Research questions

We aimed to characterize the SAPs of Portuguese schools, responding to the following questions:

RQ1. What are the quality indicators that can be considered for Portuguese strategic action schools' plans analysis?

RQ2. What are the main characteristics of the SAPs of Portuguese schools in terms of quality?

2.2.3. Data analysis

NVivo 12 software was used for data analysis in two phases, each corresponding to the two research questions mentioned.

In the first phase, the plans were analyzed without a grid, and the categories emerged from data. Coding the text of SAPs gave us a better picture

of its characteristics, and it also informed quality indicators selected for the second phase.

In the second phase, the plans were analyzed considering quality indicators (categories) defined at the end of phase one. A grid with quality indicators for schools' plans analysis was designed based on three different sources: (1) preliminary content analysis of school SAPs of Portuguese schools (phase one), (2) national guidelines of Portuguese Ministry of Education and, (3) educational literature.

2.3. Results

2.3.1. What are the quality indicators that can be considered for Portuguese strategic action schools' plans analysis?

The Ministry of Education in Portugal provided some guidelines for schools to develop their SAPs, in terms of pedagogical priorities (e.g., innovative pedagogical strategies, evaluation practices), organizational concerns (e.g., collaborative practices) and also recommendations for the SAPs' format and content (problem identification, beneficiaries, practice identification/name, goals, targets, indicators, activities, timeline, professionals involved, additional resources and need of professional development activities related to the project). Generally, SAPs presented a clear scanning of problems and resources and an intentional focus on priorities defined by the Ministry of Education (e.g., change school and classroom organization, improve teachers' collaboration and reinforce supervision practices).

Despite some variation between the plans, we identified some common categories: the problems reported concerned to students (e.g., learning

disabilities, indiscipline, demotivation, and social condition), school results (e.g., academic results and social results), and teachers (e.g., lack of collaborative work, absence of supervision practices, inappropriate teaching practices); the goals defined were also related to students (e.g., academic improvement, higher motivation, and involvement), teachers (e.g., improve teaching practices, reinforce collaborative work), school results (academic and social results), and school organization (e.g., services and structures); and the proposed activities concerned as well students (e.g., supports), teachers (e.g., teamwork, supervision, professional development), and school organization (e.g., resources). Moreover, several indicators and instruments were identified to monitor SAPs implementation.

Some of the emergent categories from the analysis mentioned above are also reported in the literature as quality indicators of school plans (e.g., Dunaway, Kim & Szad, 2012; Fernandez, 2011; Immordino et al., 2016; Strunk et al., 2016). For this study, we have considered, more specifically, the contributions of Fernandez (2011) and Strunk et al. (2016).

Combining preliminary content analysis of school SAPs of Portuguese schools, national guidelines of the Portuguese Ministry of Education, and the two articles mentioned above, our grid of analysis was developed. It included nine categories, as presented in table 2.1, along with the definition of each category considered for the analysis in phase two.

Table 2.1. Categories for quality plans analysis

Category	Definition
Alignment	Relevant elements of the proposal are aligned with the school mission/vision and national priorities.
Tailored to the students' population and school context	The proposal presents relevant data about students and school contexts that inform solutions. It includes supports related to students' needs and school characteristics.
Comprehensiveness	The proposal presents a comprehensive and integrated nature. There is a clear and explicit link between needs, goals, and solutions.
SMART goals	The proposal presents specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely goals.
Evidence- and research-based strategies	The proposal explicitly identified evidence or research-based practices or strategies to be used.
Parental and community involvement	The proposal identifies activities for parents or community members, or it implies their involvement in some way.
Implementation	The proposal specifies how the plans and their actions intend to be implemented.
Data based decisions and monitoring	The proposal includes a specific and coherent plan for monitoring and data-based decisions (including indicators, instruments, moments, participants, regulation, and feedback).
Professional development focus	The proposal includes an integrated and articulated plan for professional development.

3.2. What are the main characteristics of the SAPs of Portuguese schools in terms of quality?

From the content analysis of the SAPs, the quality of SAPs was analyzed through the indicators previously defined (Table 2.1). Table 2.2 presents the frequencies and percentages of responses coded in different categories.

Table 2.2. Coded references per category

Category	Coded references	
	Frequencies	Percentages
Alignment	4358	37,03%
Tailored to the students' population and school context	46	0,44%
Comprehensiveness	0	0
SMART goals	976	7,02%
Evidence- and research-based strategies	0	0
Parental and community involvement	802	0,50%
Implementation	9182	55,01%
Data-based decisions and monitoring	0	0
Professional development focus	0	0

We found that the plans do not explicitly refer to school mission and vision. Nevertheless, the category **Alignment** was considered as most of the plans are aligned to the national priorities such as prioritize intervention in the first school years, reinforce collaborative work and use of differentiated instruction, as in the example above:

Establish coteaching practices in the first and second levels of the school to create relative homogeneity to apply differentiated instruction strategies to support students with difficulties, until the middle of the year, and to improve capabilities, until the end of the year. (1_M)

The adequacy of the solutions to the students' needs (**Tailored to students' population and school context**) is not always clear or explicit since the references to the students and school problems or needs do not mean that the plan responds to it. For the analysis, data were coded only if the link was explicitly referred. Only a few plans explicitly demonstrate the relationship between needs and solutions. In the example presented, there is a clear relationship between the different parts of the plan:

Problem identified: Low levels of proficiency in reading and writing in the first and second levels of studies with a tendency to low in the second year of studies.

Aim: Improve proficiency levels of reading and writing in the first and second years of studies.

Activities: Coteaching practices in the classroom to support students with difficulties; Organize homogeneous groups in terms of school performance; Organize groups by proficiency level. (304_M)

As for the category of **Comprehensiveness**, the plans have problem identification, aims, and activities, yet there is no explicit and clear link between them. The comprehensive and integrated nature of the plans is not explicit in none of them. This can be explained by the template provided by the Ministry of Education. Even though guidelines refer aspects related to comprehensiveness, the template does not provide this topic to be fulfilled.

All the plans identified goals as it was a topic of the template provided by the Ministry of Education. However, most of the plans do not define goals in a **SMART** way, such as the examples above evidence:

Raise levels of success during the second year of studies (120_M)

Develop teaching and learning differentiated and personalized practices using ICT. Raise the quality of academic success of students in the first and second years of school. (122_M)

Reduce academic failure in the first cycle of studies, and the retention at the second year of studies. (151_M)

No references concerning the category **Evidence-and-research-based strategies** were found in all SAPs of Portuguese schools.

Some plans include **Parental and community involvement** activities both as an activity to respond to problem identification or as partners in activity implementation. An example of an activity for family intervention is presented:

GAMES: Student and School and Social Mediation Service with a multidisciplinary team which includes psychologists and social workers; This service is responsible for an intervention program with students and families (...) (128_M).

Contemplated in all the plans is the category **Implementation**. This was one of the topics of the template provided by the Ministry of Education, and all the plans presented specific actions that intend to be implemented. The degree of description and explanation of actions varies significantly from plan to plan. Most of the plans refer to action, resources, and participants involved in the implementation. An example is presented above:

Organize groups of 5 students, for 3 hours a week, in another room. At the first cycle of studies, teacher indicate students, and at the second cycle of studies, teachers' council indicate students;

Develop students' work by phases ("learning packages"), expressed by learning descriptors. In the first cycle of studies, phases and descriptors are elaborated by students' teacher and support teacher. In the second cycle of studies, phases, and descriptors are elaborated by teachers' council and support teachers; Implement specific tasks to overcome learning difficulties by ICT and games. (109_M)

Considering **Data-based decisions and monitoring** category, the plans analyzed only include indicators and, in some cases, instruments for data collection. Aspects like moments, participants, regulation, and feedback are rarely presented or inexistent. Despite the inclusion of this topic in the template provided, the schools were not able to elaborate on a specific and complete plan for monitoring.

All the plans include themes for professional capacity but not an integrated plan that answers explicitly to the school needs (**Professional development category**).

2.4. Discussion and conclusions

There is a consensus about the need for planning for school improvement. However, there is also a common understanding that the existence of plans does not mean that planning process was of quality and integrated on a comprehensive strategic action for school improvement (e.g., Fernandez, 2011; Davies, 2006, 2007; Eacott, 2008, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2006; Strunk et al., 2016).

Hence, our major contribution was to identify quality indicators of school plans and test their usage in the Portuguese context. We first selected possible indicators of quality, and then plans were analyzed by these quality indicators. Research about school planning quality is scarce (Fernandez, 2011; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019; Strunk et al., 2016), and our study intended to contribute to exploring this issue.

Our results indicate that school plans considered problem identification, aims, and solutions. However, these plans are much more description or a list of actions to be done than a document that supports the strategic action of a given school. This may undermine the quality of the plans and also its implementation. Educational literature relates plans quality to plans' implementation, supporting the idea that planning must be strategically school-based (Davies, 2006, 2007; Eacott, 2008, 2011; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019).

Strategy in education can be seen as a way of thinking and choosing a direction within a given context (Davies, 2006, 2007; Eacott, 2008, 2011). In that sense, short to long term plans must emerge from that strategic vision. From these data, we can question if the strategic action plans are really strategic because we were not able to identify evidence that supports it. It may be argued that school principals elaborated on these plans to answer to external expectations and requirements that do not respond to school needs or context problems (Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019).

The SAPs may represent an effort to identified school problems and solutions considering the Ministry of Education guidelines. The template used supported schools and professionals in the identification of the list of topics to be considered in a plan and guided the planning process. Even though the guidelines and the template from the Ministry of Education have included plans'

quality indicators, the SAPs analyzed seems to lack of relevant dimensions such as a comprehensive nature that integrates needs and solutions in a data-based process supported on evidence or research-based options (Fernandez, 2011; Strunk et al., 2016). Even though the template created may be considered a tool to guide and support schools, this may reduce principals' school autonomy and constrain strategic thinking and planning (Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019). More than checkboxes for accomplishing external requirements, plans should be strategically articulated and aligned to school mission and vision (Davies, 2006, 2007; Eacott, 2008, 2011; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019).

The results of this study highlight the significant challenges that policymakers and school leaders encounter for improvement and change. It is of high importance to improve strategic leadership in schools so that plans and actions explicitly represent the school vision and mission. Besides, when considering strategic planning, it is necessary to develop knowledge about what planning is and how to do it strategically, as well as it is needed to design a model for quality planning evaluation with explicit and relevant indicators.

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Capítulo 3. What about us?
**Teachers' participation in school
strategic action plans**

Abstract

Little research has been conducted on teachers' participation in strategic planning in Portuguese schools. The purpose of this paper is to examine teachers' participation in decision making and strategic action planning in Portuguese schools. A survey employing self-administered scales, with a Likert-type scale, was taken. Teachers' participation, other stakeholders' participation, planning and decision making, professional development, plans' importance and validation, and ownership were the dimensions considered. Data were collected from 804 Portuguese teachers. Participants reported moderate to high levels of participation in strategic action plans, but they also reported low levels of participation in overall school decisions, plans' importance and validation, sense of ownership and recognition of relevant opportunities for professional development. The results indicate that these different aspects vary depending on experience as a teacher and the professional roles of teachers. This study suggests the need to explore the dominant types of participation and collaboration in Portuguese schools and to analyse the importance of other variables. School leaders should encourage collaboration and participation by modelling expectations and behaviours for active involvement, offering time and space for such behaviours and valuing/using teachers and other stakeholders' contributions.

What about us? Teachers' participation in school strategic action plans

Keywords: Strategic action; Decision making; Teachers; Participation.

3.1. Introduction

Schools in various parts of the world adopt plans or projects to improve the quality of school processes and students' learning (Bell, 1998; Leithwood, Jantzi & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006; Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014). Generally, schools' improvement efforts are formalized in a school plan (a document), which is conceptualized through a formal planning process (Strunk, Marsh, Bush-Mecenas, & Duque, 2016). Similar to other countries (Ali, 2012, 2018; Davies, 2003, 2004; Eacott, 2008; Strunk et al., 2016), in Portugal, several school reform policies have mandated formal planning as a means of change and improvement. For instance, Portuguese schools were recently asked to elaborate and implement Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) to improve student success (Ministry of Education, 2016).

Despite the widespread use of plans, little evidence exists about the quality of school strategic plans concerning both their processes and outcomes (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2006; Strunk et al., 2016), and this is also true within the Portuguese educational system. Prevalent planning practices in schools are often short-term, usually based on the immediate needs of the school, and the main focus has been the distribution of duties and resources as well as control budget and accountability (Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014). School improvement plans appear to be quite similar in terms of structure and content, typically with a listing of goals, objectives, and strategies (Meyers & Hitt, 2018). Few studies have examined the quality of these school plans, their translation into changed or improved practices, and the related outcomes over time (Strunk et al., 2016). Furthermore, research on strategic planning has identified fewer positive findings, supporting the idea that "the mere act of generating strategic plans in school reforms is not enough" (Strunk et al., 2016, pp. 263-264). Indeed, it is crucial to deepen our knowledge

regarding the planning and implementing processes for high-quality school strategic plans for research, practical and political implications.

The main focus of the present study is to analyse school improvement processes (planning and implementing) in Portuguese schools. Specifically, it is intended to analyse the critical processes of strategic planning and action related to SAPs. A key element for high-quality plans is the active and meaningful involvement and commitment of teachers and other school stakeholders (Garza, Drysdale, Gurr, Jacobson & Merchant, 2014; Hajisoteriou, Karousiou & Angelides, 2018; Louis & Lee, 2016; Strunk et al., 2016). This study is especially noteworthy because little research has been conducted on teachers' or other stakeholders' participation in strategic planning in Portuguese schools. International research as well as Portuguese political guidelines have supported and reinforced the need for teachers' and other stakeholders' participation in this process as a condition for successful action (e.g., Garza et al., 2014; Hajisoteriou et al., 2018; Ismail, Kanesan & Muhammad, 2018; Labée et al., 2015; Louis & Lee, 2016; Machado, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2016; Myende & Bhengu, 2015; Strunk et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important to understand the processes and results of SAPs in Portuguese schools and, specifically, teachers' participation in decision making and plans. In this paper, the authors argue that school improvement and strategic action cannot be established without the participation of key school actors. The following sections briefly conceptualize the importance of teachers' participation in school action plans and present an empirical study related to strategic action processes in Portuguese schools.

3.1.1. Teachers' participation in strategic action plans

Teachers' participation in decision processes is not a new topic in educational literature (cf. Pashiardis, 1994). Both empirical research literature and international educational policies have strengthened the importance of teachers' roles in decision making and extending their involvement in the overall decision process. Several authors support the relevance of teachers' participation in decision making, thereby indicating that strategic planning is a joint and collaborative process (e.g., Cheng, 2011; Davies, 2004; Eacott, 2008; Friend, 2000; Leithwooth et al., 2006; Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014; Reynolds et al., 2014; Slater, 2006).

The collaboration of those involved in strategic planning seems to be a prerequisite both for successful planning and implementation (Ismail et al., 2018; Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014; Labée et al., 2015; Myende & Bhengu, 2015). This is related to the growing arguments that suggest that collaborative practices, embedded in the on-going behaviour of teachers, affect school improvement (Carpenter, 2018; Hajisoteriou et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2018; Louis & Lee, 2016). Hajisoteriou et al. (2018) "claim that collaboration is not an adequate condition for school improvement" (p.16) but instead "is the cornerstone of school improvement in culturally diverse schools" (p. 17).

School improvement requires systematic and interactive processes of working together, both for planning and implementing strategic action. One important question to explore is related to the factors that promote teachers' participation and collaboration. In a qualitative study, Mbugua and Rarieya (2014) identified several factors that facilitate teachers' involvement in planning: (i) knowledge about the content and process of strategic planning; (ii) effective communication; and (iii) collaboration between stakeholders. On the other hand, top-down decisions, lack of autonomy, lack of knowledge and expertise about

strategic planning, lack of vision and absence of shared experiences, individualized approaches and focus on formal aspects of planning were found to be factors that hinder teachers' full engagement in the strategic planning process. Additionally, other authors have highlighted the importance of creating time and opportunities for collaboration and the need to reinforce and involve teachers in collaboration processes (Friend, 2000; Sehgal, Nambudiri & Mishra, 2017; Slater, 2006). Indeed, collaboration is challenging and must be intentionally promoted and supported.

Despite the importance of participation and collaboration, they vary significantly from school to school. Moreover, teachers' participation is not the same at different issues/topics of discussion within the school context. Previous research has reported that teachers are more active and express more desire for participation in instructional decisions rather than managerial decisions (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). In a quantitative study, related to the effects of teachers' participation in decision making, Sarafidou and Chatziioannidis (2013) identified student issues as the domain with the highest levels of reported participation by teachers. Concerning problems related to teachers themselves, teachers reported moderate levels of actual participation in decision making. Last, teachers reported lower levels of actual participation in managerial decisions, even though teachers also reported low levels of interest or desire in participating in these sorts of decisions (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013).

Combined, teachers' participation in schools' strategic actions or schools' decision-making process is a relevant issue (Gurley, Peters, Collins & Fifolt, 2015; Lahtero & Kuusilehto-Awale, 2013; Louis & Lee, 2016; Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014; Myende & Bhengu, 2015; Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013; Sehgal et al., 2017). Different dimensions related to teachers' participation are discussed in

each study: (i) teachers' knowledge and participation in the process (Bellei, Vanni, Valenzuela & Contreras, 2016; Cheng, 2011; Labée et al., 2015; Leithwood et al, 2006; Elmore, Forman, Stosich & Bocala, 2014); (ii) teachers' input in decision-making processes (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Leithwood et al, 2006; Cheung & Cheng, 2002); (iii) teachers' sense of ownership and personal contribution to the process (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Leithwood et al, 2006); (iv) teachers' perception of plans' efficacy to school improvement (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Leithwood et al, 2006); and (v) professional development opportunities given to teachers in coherence with school strategic actions (Harris & Young, 2000; Cheng, 2011; Elmore et al, 2014). Considering the high resort of school strategic action planning in Portuguese schools and that little research has been conducted on teachers' participation, the present study aimed to analyse Portuguese teachers' participation in school strategic action plans by taking into account the dimensions mentioned.

3.1.2. School strategic action plans in Portugal

The Portuguese educational reform agendas, as in other countries, reflect the need to improve schools both in processes and results (Bellei et al., 2016; Harris, Adams, Jones & Muniandy, 2015; Machado, 2017). The expansion of compulsory education until twelve years of formal education and the maintained academic underachievement rates compelled successive policies for reducing and preventing students' academic difficulties. Since the 80s, the Portuguese government have mandated school programs for academic success (e.g., Integrated Program for Promotion of Academic Success, 1989; Program Education for All, 1991; Plan for Elimination of Child Work Exploration, 1999; National Plan for Drop-Out Prevention, 2004; Educational Territories for Priority

Intervention Program, 1996, 2006, 2012; Plus Academic Success Program 2009; National Program for Academic Success Promotion, 2016). Changes in the above programmes reflect tendencies for a compromise between top-down and bottom-up processes (Machado, 2017). Specifically, the National Program for Academic Success Promotion, launched in 2016, is based on the idea that school communities best know their own contexts, difficulties, and strengths; thus, they are better prepared to design their own strategic action plans at a school level with the intent of improving learning outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2016). With this initiative, Portuguese schools were invited to apply for financial support, with a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for academic success. SAP is defined as a tool to guide and structure actions related to the plan aims. Some guidelines were provided for SAP priorities at pedagogical (e.g., innovative pedagogical strategies, evaluation practices) and organizational levels (e.g., collaborative practices) and for SAPs' format and content (problem identification, beneficiaries, practice identification/name, goals, targets, indicators, activities, timeline, professionals involved, additional resources and need for professional development activities related to the project). Guidelines and support were also provided for the planning process. A group of three people from each school received information and training during the planning process, but each school was instructed to ensure broad participation and dissemination on SAP elaboration and implementation.

The SAPs were elaborated and approved on July 2016 and have been implemented since September 2016 in 663 Portuguese schools. In September 2018, action plans were expected to be internalized in the school mission and project.

3.2. Method

Considering the recent SAPs in Portuguese schools, the current study aimed to understand where SAPs received financial support from the teachers' perspective and if and how their voice was considered throughout the process. More specifically, the study had the following main research questions:

Research question 1. How do teachers perceive their participation in the SAP process?

Research question 2. Are there differences in teachers' participation in SAPs considering teachers' gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience in the job?

Research question 3. Are there differences in teachers' participation in SAPs considering teachers' leadership role in the school?

Research question 4. Are there associations between teachers' participation in SAPs and teachers' knowledge about plans, other stakeholders' participation, participative nature of planning, recognition of importance and validation of plans, sense of ownership related to plans and professional development opportunities related to plans?

3.2.1. Research procedures and participants

The study was conducted with a sample of principals and teachers from Portuguese schools. Participants were recruited nationally through an invitation letter sent by email to the principals of the 663 schools with SAPs. Contact with the potential participants was mediated by school principals. Informed consent was obtained from participants, from the school boards and the Ministry of Education, as required by the Portuguese Ministry of Education. No compensation was provided, and participants were guaranteed full confidentiality.

All questionnaires were anonymous. Questionnaires were completed by participants using an online version accessed through a link sent with the invitation letter. Data were collected between January 2018 and February 2018.

The final sample consisted of 804 participants from a total of 539 different public Portuguese schools (see Table 1.1 for a description of sample characteristics).

Table 3.1. Sample characteristics

	N	(%)
Gender		
Male	193	24
Female	611	76
Educational status		
Graduation	534	66.4
Postgraduate studies	270	33.6
Years of experience as a teacher		
Less than 10	15	1.9
11-20	143	17.9
21-30	362	45
31-40	211	26.2
41-50	16	2
Years of experience as a teacher in the actual school		
Less than 10	318	39.6
11-20	263	32.7
21-30	148	18.4
More than 31	31	3.9
Role		
General council	9	1.1
Top leadership	180	22.4
Intermediate leadership	131	16.3
Class coordinator	144	17.9
Other coordination roles	122	15.2
Without additional roles	216	26.9

The sample was composed of 23,8% males and 76,2% females, and participants were aged 25 to 69 years ($M=50.42$, $SD=7.17$). Considering professional experience, 44,6% of the participants had 21 to 30 years of experience as a teacher, and 39,6% of teachers had less than 10 years of experience in the actual school. One participant did not report their age, two participants did not report their professional role, fifty-seven participants did not report their number of years as a teacher and forty-four did not report the number of years as a teacher in the actual school.

3.2.2. Measures

The data were collected using two questionnaires: *Participação na Ação e Planejamento Estratégicos* [Participation on Strategic Planning and Action (PSPA)] and *Processos de Ação Estratégica para a Melhoria das Escolas* [Strategic Action Processes for School Improvement (SAPSI)]. These questionnaires were constructed by the ends of this study. No instruments were found to answer the research questions. Thus, a process of construction and validation of the questionnaires was performed (Carvalho, Cabral, Verdasca & Alves, 2018ab).

Participation in Strategic Planning and Action. The PSPA has 15 items on a 5-point scale that measures the degree of participation of teachers and other stakeholders on school strategic action plans. Participants indicate their degree of knowledge or participation on a 5-point Likert scale (from “very low” = 1 to “very high” = 5, giving a possible maximum score of 75). Each item presented a correlation with the total score ranging from .64 to .94, and the global internal consistency of the total scale, measured by Cronbach’s alpha, was .95. Principal component analysis followed by Varimax Rotation provided two factors (F) that

explain 78.59% of the variance: F1—Teachers' knowledge and participation, and F2—Other stakeholders' participation (Carvalho et al., 2018a). F1 explained 60.97% of the common variance, while F2 explained 17.63%. The Cronbach's alphas of these two scales were very good (DeVellis, 2012): .95 for F1 and .93 for F2.

Strategic Action Processes for School Improvement. The SAPSI has 27 items on a 4-point scale that measure dimensions of school strategic action plans related to teachers' knowledge and participation, decision-making processes, and professional development related to school priorities. Participants indicated their degree of agreement with each statement on a 4-point Likert scale (from "strongly disagree" = 1 to "strongly agree" = 4, giving a possible maximum score of 108). Each item presented a correlation with the total score ranging from .54 to .89, and the global internal consistency of the total scale, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was .95. Principal component analysis followed by Varimax Rotation provided five factors (F) that explain 70.02% of the variance: F1—Participative planning and decision making, F2—Professional development, F3—SAP importance and validation, F4—Unipersonal and unilateral decision making, and F5 – Ownership (Carvalho et al., 2018b). F1 explained 43.74% of the common variance, F2 explained 9.05%, F3 explained 6.99%, F4 explained 6.00% and F5 explained 4.24%. The Cronbach's alphas of these five scales were very good (DeVellis, 2012): .92 for F1, .93 for F2, .89 for F3, .80 for F4, and .87 for F5.

3.2.3. Statistical analysis

All analyses were conducted using *IBM SPSS Statistics 24*. Univariate analysis was used to identify the self-reported degree of teachers' knowledge and participation in SAPs and to analyse other strategic action processes. Bivariate

analysis was used to investigate gender and educational status differences in knowledge and participation in SAPs and the other strategic action processes considered. Subsamples were used to have similar distributions of subgroups.

Differences considering other sociodemographic variables (general experience, experience in the actual school, professional roles) were assessed by one-way ANOVA, and the relationships between strategic action processes were analysed through Pearson correlations.

Assumptions of parametric tests were not satisfied. However, we computed both parametric and their equivalent nonparametric tests as advised by Fife-Schaw (2006). Given that the conclusions drawn from both sets of tests were the same in all cases, we opted to present the parametric test results because these are more robust and allow us to use multivariate analyses (Fife-Schaw, 2006).

3.3. Results

3.3.1. How do teachers perceive their participation in the SAP process?

Descriptive statistics of participants' responses to both questionnaires were considered to analyse teachers' perceptions of their participation in SAPs. The mean global score on the PSPA scale was 38.26 ($SD=11.43$), ranging from 12 to 75. This score is roughly equivalent to a mean response of 3 ("medium") to each item of the scale. The mean score on the Teachers' knowledge and participation factor was 3.65 ($SD=1.04$). This response tendency indicates a medium to high degree of teachers' knowledge and participation in SAPs. The mean score on the Other stakeholders' participation factor was 1.82 ($SD=1.26$).

This response tendency indicates a low degree of participation in SAPs by other stakeholders, parents, and students.

The mean global score on the SAPSI scale was 66.74 ($SD=16.28$), ranging from 26 to 108. This score is roughly equivalent to a mean response of 3 (“agree”) to each item of the scale. The mean score on the Participative planning and decision making factor was 2.16 ($SD=1.03$). This response tendency indicates disagreement about the participative nature of planning and decision-making processes related to SAP. The mean score on the Unipersonal and unilateral decision making process factor was 1.81 ($SD=1.09$). This response tendency also indicates a lack of agreement about the participative nature of the planning and decision-making process and the assumption of a unipersonal and unilateral decision-making process in SAPs. The mean score on the SAP importance and validation factor was 2.77 ($SD=1.03$). This response tendency indicates relative agreement about SAPs' importance. The mean score on the Ownership factor was 2.44 ($SD=1.17$). This response tendency indicates a lack of agreement about felling owner and the author of the SAP. The mean score on the Professional development factor was 1.72 ($SD=1.24$). This response tendency indicates a lack of agreement about the existence of and the adequacy of opportunities for professional development related to SAP.

3.3.2. Are there differences in teachers' participation in SAPs considering teachers' gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience in the job?

Table 3.2 present differences in self-reported strategic action processes considering socio-demographic variables.

Table 3.2. Socio-demographic and strategic action processes correlates

	N	TKP Mean (DP)		SP Mean (DP)		PPDM Mean (DP)		UDM Mean (DP)		IV Mean (DP)		O Mean (DP)		PD Mean (DP)	
Gender															
Male	193	3.70 (1.10)	$t(449)=.43$	1.83 (1.23)	$t(449)=-.74$	2.30 (.93)	$t(449)=.87^*$	1.67 (1.03)	$t(449)=-1.74$	2.83 (1.04)	$t(449)=-.01$	2.53 (1.20)	$t(449)=1.19$	1.90 (1.19)	$t(449)=1.50$
Female	258 ^a	3.66 (1.00)		1.91 (1.29)		2.21 (1.04)		1.85 (1.10)		2.83 (.91)		2.40 (1.11)		1.73 (1.22)	
Educational status															
Graduation	280 ^a	3.62 (1.03)	$t(548)=-1.00^*$	1.91 (1.22)	$t(548)=1.18$	2.18 (1.05)	$t(548)=-.47$	1.71 (1.10)	$t(548)=-1.67$	2.72 (1.08)	$t(548)=-.43$	2.42 (1.15)	$t(548)=-1.54$	1.68 (1.27)	$t(548)=-2.09$
Postgraduate studies	270	3.71 (1.14)		1.78 (1.23)		2.22 (1.01)		1.87 (1.03)		2.76 (1.06)		2.57 (1.17)		1.90 (1.19)	
General Experience															
Less than 10	15	3.24 (.83)	$F(4,742)=2.95^*$	1.64 (1.52)	$F(4,742)=.85$	1.53 (1.08)	$F(4,742)=9.46^{***}$	1.47 (1.23)	$F(4,742)=2.04$	2.50 (1.15)	$F(4,742)=1.09$	1.84 (1.15)	$F(4,742)=2.35$	1.55 (1.25)	$F(4,742)=4.13^{**}$
11-20	143	3.48 (1.02)		1.79 (1.36)		1.82 (1.17)		1.71 (1.26)		2.65 (1.05)		2.30 (1.14)		1.44 (1.22)	
21-30	362	3.69 (1.06)		1.72 (1.23)		2.21 (.98)		1.85 (1.07)		2.78 (1.05)		2.50 (1.18)		1.81 (1.25)	
31-40	211	3.77 (.99)		1.88 (1.19)		2.40 (.88)		1.84 (.95)		2.84 (.97)		2.54 (1.11)		1.76 (1.17)	
41-50	16	4.03 (.86)		2.08 (1.03)		2.55 (.84)		2.42 (1.09)		2.94 (.69)		2.75 (1.03)		2.49 (.93)	
Experience in actual school															
Less than 10	318	3.37 (1.05)	$F(3,756)=15.73^{***}$	1.69 (1.38)	$F(3,756)=1.71$	1.85 (1.12)	$F(3,756)=20.30^{***}$	1.72 (1.20)	$F(3,756)=2.00$	2.61 (1.11)	$F(3,756)=6.28^{***}$	2.20 (1.18)	$F(3,756)=10.51^{***}$	1.42 (1.22)	$F(3,756)=12.79^{***}$
11-20	263	3.88 (.94)		1.83 (1.18)		2.39 (.85)		1.90 (.99)		2.94 (.92)		2.72 (1.03)		2.00 (1.15)	
21-30	148	3.74 (1.04)		1.86 (1.08)		2.38 (.94)		1.88 (1.02)		2.68 (1.04)		2.44 (1.25)		1.80 (1.18)	
More than 31	31	4.16 (.83)		2.13 (1.17)		2.62 (.78)		2.08 (.94)		3.06 (.76)		2.72 (1.14)		2.09 (1.35)	

TKP - Teachers Knowledge and participation; SP - Stakeholders participation; PPDM - Participative planning and decision making on SAP; UDM - Unipersonal and unilateral decision making process; IV - SAPs importance and validation; O – Sense of ownership; PD - Professional development opportunities.

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

^aSubsample

Teachers' gender. No gender differences were found in teachers' knowledge and participation, stakeholders' participation, unipersonal and unilateral decision-making process, SAP importance and validation, sense of ownership, or professional development opportunities. Significant differences between males and females were only found in participative planning and decision-making on SAP ($t(449)=.87, p=.019$), with males displaying higher scores.

Educational status. There were significant differences in teachers' knowledge and participation on SAPs ($t(548) = -1.00, p=.038$) depending on educational status, with higher levels found among teachers with higher education levels.

Teachers' experience. Teachers' experience includes the number of years as a teacher and the number of years as a teacher in the actual school. Participants with higher years of experience tended to present higher scores in all factors.

Considering years of experience as a teacher, there were significant differences in Knowledge and Participation ($F(4,742) = 2.95, p=.020$), Participative planning and decision making ($F(4,742) = 9.46, p=.000$), and in recognition of professional development opportunities ($F(4,742) = 4.13, p=.003$).

The Gabriel Post-Hoc Test displayed no differences in knowledge and participation considering groups of teachers.

The Gabriel Post-Hoc Test evidenced differences in participative planning and decision making between teachers with less than 10 years of experience and teachers with experience between 21 and 30 years ($p=.020$), between 31 and 40 years ($p=.002$) and between 41 and 50 years. Significant

differences were found between teachers with 11-20 years of experience and teachers with 21-30 ($p=.001$), 31-40 ($p=.000$), and 41-50 ($p=.018$) years of experience.

The Gabriel Post-Hoc Test evidenced significant differences in the identification of professional development opportunities between teachers with 11-20 years of experience and teachers with experience between 21 and 30 years ($p=.015$) and 41 and 50 years of experience ($p=.003$).

Considering years of experience as a teacher in the actual school, there were significant differences in Teachers' knowledge and participation ($F(3,756) = 15.73, p=.000$), Participative planning and decision making ($F(3,756) = 20.30, p=.000$), SAP importance and validation ($F(3,756) = 6.28, p=.000$), sense of Ownership ($F(3,756) = 10.51, p=.000$) and recognition of Professional development opportunities ($F(3,756) = 12.79, p=.000$).

The Gabriel Post-Hoc Test evidenced significant differences in teachers' knowledge and participation between teachers with less than 10 years of experience and teachers with more than 10 years ($p=.000, p=.001, p=.000$) in the actual school. Differences in participative planning and decision making were found between teachers with less than 10 years of experience and teachers with more than 10 years ($p=.000, p=.000, p=.000$) in the actual school. Differences in SAP importance and validation were found between teachers with less than 10 years of experience and teachers with 11-20 ($p=.001$) and more than 31 ($p=.047$) years of experience in the actual school. In professional development opportunities, differences were found between teachers with less than 10 years of experience and teachers with more than 10 years ($p=.000, p=.007, p=.005$). In the sense of Ownership, differences were found between teachers with less than

10 years of experience in the actual school and teachers with 11-20 ($p=.000$) and more than 31 years ($p=.038$) of experience in the actual school.

3.3.3. Are there differences in teachers' participation in the SAPs considering teachers' leadership roles in the school?

Table 3.3 presents differences between teachers considering their professional role in the school.

Table 3.3. Differences between teachers with different professional roles

	GC	TL	IL	CC	OCR	WAR	F
	(n=9)	(n=180)	(n=131)	(n=144)	(n=122)	(n=216)	(df=5,796)
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	
	<i>(DP)</i>	<i>(DP)</i>	<i>(DP)</i>	<i>(DP)</i>	<i>(DP)</i>	<i>(DP)</i>	
TKP	3.84 (1.02)	4.46 (.51)	4.00 (0.79)	2.98 (1.07)	3.71 (.88)	3.18 (1.03)	63.34 ($p=0.000$)
SP	2.19 (1.29)	1.99 (1.04)	1.91 (1.17)	1.64 (1.39)	1.87 (1.25)	1.68 (1.35)	2.14 ($p=0.059$)
PPDM	2.19 (.48)	2.74 (.60)	2.46 (.86)	1.67 (1.12)	2.30 (.93)	1.74 (1.08)	33.45 ($p=0.000$)
UDM	1.52 (1.02)	1.90 (.85)	2.11 (0.89)	1.63 (1.24)	1.83 (1.03)	1.67 (1.26)	3.97 ($p=0.001$)
IV	2.89 (.97)	3.31 (.67)	2.99 (.82)	2.31 (1.17)	2.83 (.93)	2.46 (1.09)	23.92 ($p=0.000$)
O	2.56 (1.37)	3.26 (.82)	2.84 (.85)	1.75 (1.07)	2.50 (1.07)	1.95 (1.17)	50.54 ($p=0.000$)
PD	1.76 (.96)	2.56 (.91)	1.98 (1.18)	1.17 (1.14)	1.77 (1.19)	1.20 (1.16)	38.64 ($p=0.000$)

GC - General Council; TL - Top leadership; IL - Intermediate leadership; CC - Class coordinators; OCR - Other coordination roles; WAR - Without additional roles.

TKP - Teachers Knowledge and participation; SP - Stakeholders participation; PPDM - Participative planning and decision making on SAP; UDM - Unipersonal and unilateral decision-making process; IV - SAPs importance and validation; O - Sense of ownership; PD - Professional development opportunities.

Depending on teachers' roles in the school, there were significant differences in the strategic action processes, such as teachers' knowledge and participation ($F(5,796) = 63.34, p = .000$), participative planning and decision making ($F(5,796) = 34.45, p = .000$), unidirectional decision making ($F(5,796) = 3.97, p = .001$), importance and validation ($F(5,796) = 23.92, p = .000$), ownership ($F(5,796) = 50.54, p = .000$), and professional development ($F(5,796) = 38.64, p = .000$).

Considering the degree of teachers' knowledge and participation on SAP, the Gabriel Post-Hoc Test revealed significant differences ($p = .000$) between teachers with top leadership roles and the other groups of teachers, with or without leadership or additional roles (intermediate leadership roles, class coordinator, other coordination roles, without additional roles). There were also significant differences between teachers with intermediate leadership roles and class coordinators ($p = .000$) and with teachers without additional roles ($p = .000$). There were also differences between teachers with other coordination roles than those identified and class coordinators ($p = .000$) and teachers without any coordination roles ($p = .000$).

In participative planning and decision making, the Gabriel Post-Hoc Test evidenced differences between teachers with top leadership roles and class coordinators ($p = .000$), with other coordination roles ($p = .001$), and teachers without additional roles ($p = .000$). There were also differences between teachers with intermediate leadership roles and class coordinators ($p = .000$) and with teachers without additional roles ($p = .000$). There were also differences between teachers with other coordination roles than those identified and class coordinators ($p = .000$) and teachers without any coordination roles ($p = .000$).

There were significant differences in the unipersonal and unilateral decision-making process between teachers with intermediate leadership roles and class coordinators ($p=0.003$) and with teachers without additional roles ($p=0.003$).

There were significant differences in the importance that participants attribute to SAP between teachers with top leadership roles and class coordinators ($p=0.000$), teachers with other coordination roles ($p=0.000$) and teachers without additional roles ($p=0.000$). There were also differences between teachers with intermediate leadership roles and class coordinators ($p=0.000$) and with teachers without additional roles ($p=0.000$). Differences were also found between teachers with other coordination roles than those identified and class coordinators ($p=0.000$) and teachers without any coordination roles ($p=.008$).

Significant differences exist in the degree to which teachers feel ownership and contribute to SAP between teachers with top leadership roles and the other groups of teachers with or without leadership or additional roles (intermediate leadership roles, $p=0.004$; class coordinator, $p=0.000$; other coordination roles, $p=0.000$; without additional roles, $p=0.000$). There were also differences between teachers with intermediate leadership roles and class coordinators ($p=0.000$) and with teachers without additional roles ($p=0.000$). Differences were also found between teachers with other coordination roles than those identified and class coordinators ($p=0.000$) and teachers without any coordination roles ($p=0.000$).

Considering self-reported opportunities for professional development related to SAP, the Gabriel Post-Hoc Test evidenced differences between teachers with top leadership roles and the other groups of teachers with or without leadership or additional roles (intermediate leadership roles, $p=0.000$; class

coordinator, $p=0.000$; other coordination roles, $p=0.000$; without additional roles, $p=0.000$). There were also differences between teachers with intermediate leadership roles and class coordinators ($p=0.000$) and with teachers without additional roles ($p=0.000$). Differences were also found between teachers with other coordination roles than those identified and class coordinators ($p=0.000$) and teachers without any coordination roles ($p=0.000$).

3.3.4. Are there associations between teachers' participation in SAPs and teachers' knowledge about plans, other stakeholders' participation, participative nature of planning, recognition of importance and validation of plans, sense of ownership related to plans and professional development opportunities related to plans?

The correlation analysis in Table 3.4 indicates a significantly positive relationship between the elements of PSPA and SAPSI. The strongest relationship was between teachers' participation and ownership ($r=.755$, $p=.000$). The next strongest relationship was between teachers' participation and SAP importance and validation ($r=.706$, $p=.000$). Participative decision making ($r=.632$, $p=.000$) and professional development opportunities related to SAP ($r=.601$, $p=.000$) also had a strong and positive relationship with teachers' participation. Notably, participative decision-making and a sense of ownership were strongly related ($r=.642$, $p=.000$), and both dimensions also had strong and linear relationships with professional development ($r=.612$, $p=.000$; $r=.653$, $p=.000$) and SAP importance and validation ($r=.604$, $p=.000$; $r=.662$, $p=.000$). The SAP importance and validation and professional development opportunities had a strong relationship ($r=.555$, $p=.000$). The remaining elements were found to

have only moderate to small and positive correlations with each other (cf. Table 3.4).

Table 3.4. Correlation Matrix Analysis between PSPA and SAPSI factors

	TKP	SP	PPDM	UDM	IV	O	PD
TKP	-	.403**	.632**	.274**	.706**	.755**	.601**
SP		-	.478**	.157**	.365**	.274**	.380**
PPDM			-	.404**	.604**	.642**	.612**
UDM				-	.187**	.274**	.270**
IV					-	.662**	.555**
O						-	.653**
PD							-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

TKP - Teachers Knowledge and participation; SP - Stakeholders participation; PPDM - Participative planning and decision making on SAP; UDM - Unipersonal and unilateral decision-making process; IV - SAPs importance and validation; O – Sense of ownership; PD - Professional development opportunities.

3.4. Discussion

This study examines essential aspects related to successful school strategic action plans, such as teachers' and other stakeholders' participation, participative vs. unilateral/unipersonal decision-making processes, SAP importance recognition and validation, sense of ownership related to school plans and opportunities for professional development intentionally organized related to school plans. Although the participants reported moderate to high levels of participation in SAPs, they also reported low levels of participation in overall school decisions, SAP importance and validation, the sense of ownership, and recognition of relevant opportunities for professional development. Our results indicate that these different aspects vary depending on experience as a teacher in the actual school and professional roles. Teachers with more years of experience in the actual school indicated having more knowledge about school

plans, tended to participate more in school decision making, and reported plans' importance and ownership. Top and intermediate leaders also reported higher levels of knowledge and participation in school plans, higher recognition, validation of its importance, and a higher sense of ownership.

Even though the current legal framework in Portugal encourages the participation of teachers and other stakeholders in school decision making, it appears that, in practice, this is not fully realized. In this study, participants are still considering that teachers' participation in SAPs is moderate, and other stakeholders' participation is low. It appears that decision making and strategic planning are not participative, and they tend to be the responsibility of a restricted group or the management team. In the specific case of SAPs, this can be explained by the fact that these plans need to be prepared in a short period by a group of three persons, as suggested by the Ministry of Education guidelines. In addition, as in other countries, there is still a tendency towards an individualistic paradigm in Portugal, where some leaders neglect conditions and opportunities for collaboration and participation (Mbugua & Rarieya, 2018; Slater, 2006) and where some teachers are reluctant to seek greater involvement in decisions, mainly of school or managerial nature (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). These conditions weaken schoolwide participation in planning and decision making related to SAPs.

In this study, a relationship was also found between teachers' knowledge and participation and other dimensions, such as the participative nature of decision-making processes, the importance attributed to school plans, a sense of ownership and authorship of the plans and the recognition of relevant professional development opportunities. These results indicate that participation and collaboration are essential determinants of plan and action success in

educational contexts. The participative nature of decision making and strategic planning seems to underscore the relevance, value and adequacy of schools' plans from the perspective of teachers, which is an important issue when considering high quality school plans (e.g., Garza et al., 2014; Hajisoteriou et al., 2018; Ismail et al, 2018; Louis & Lee, 2016; Myende & Bhengu, 2015; Strunk et al., 2016). However, differences in these dimensions of teachers' experience and professional roles also point to lower levels of participation from some teachers, which may hinder their involvement in school actions and improvement. Despite the critical role of school leaders in decision making, they also have to create conditions for whole-school participation in planning and implementing school plans. Translating vision and direction into action in school plans obliges leaders to generate strategic methods (Davies, 2003, 2004; Eacott, 2008), and such strategies may need to involve all school actors. As mentioned by Mbugua e Rarieya (2014), strategic planning should not be limited to a school planning group or school administrators. Instead, teachers and other stakeholders need to be actively involved in the process of strategically planning for their school.

Active participation and collaboration need to be routine in school daily life. School administrators should encourage staff to participate in formulating strategic plans (Carpenter, 2018; Cheng, 2011; Seghal et al., 2018).

Collaboration requires a commitment on the part of each individual to a shared goal, demands careful attention to communication skills, and obliges participants to maintain parity throughout their interactions. Collaboration does not occur because of administrative mandate, peer pressure, or political correctness. Nor does it occur by proclamation. (Friend, 2000, p.1)

Therefore, it is necessary to create conditions for the recognition of collaboration importance and relevance but also to organize time and space to intentionally support collaboration endeavours. Considering all of the above, school leaders have an important role for facilitating teachers' interactions, stimulating reflection and participation and, through this, ownership and involvement from teachers and other stakeholders (Gurley et al., 2015; Louis & Lee, 2016; Sehgal et al., 2017). More than the traditional means of improving teachers' preparation, it is necessary to create supportive school environments (Louis & Lee, 2016; Slater, 2006). Collaborative cultures and professional learning communities need to be reinforced for school improvement and strategic action. It obliges a paradigm shift "from single institution to the creation of a community that more effectively solves problems and meets needs requires a new way of thinking about working together" (Slater, 2006, p.220).

The results of the present study contributed to a deeper understanding of participatory decision making and strategic action planning in Portuguese schools. In future studies, it would be interesting to examine the impact of different types of participation and collaboration on SAP results and to more deeply explore the relationship between other organizational variables and SAP processes and results. Additionally, for practical reasons, it would also be interesting to analyse specific aspects related to the content and format of SAPs. For example, evidenced-based and innovative practices are being studied for high-quality strategic action plans (Thessin, 2015), and this is of great importance for supporting decision making in education.

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**Capítulo 4. Planning for school
improvement in Portuguese
schools: Possibilities and
challenges**

Abstract

Strategic planning and strategic action have been identified as valuable frameworks for school improvement. So, school reforms in different parts of the world have mandated formal planning to support improvement. However, planning is not always fully embraced and knowledge-based, which raises questions about schools' efficacy in strategic planning and action processes. In that sense, it is important to develop a better understanding of strategic planning and action. This study is focused on the processes of school planning in Portuguese schools by exploring how three Portuguese schools engaged in strategic action planning processes. A qualitative multiple-case design, based on instrumental cases, was employed. School strategic processes, critical factors for high-quality strategic action and planning, and perceived outcomes of strategic action plans were identified. The findings indicate that schools have embraced strategic action plans, despite the difficulties encountered during the planning and implementing process. Planning was limited by deadlines, failing in teachers, and other stakeholders' participation. Limited financial support and human resources were identified as factors that hinder plan implementation. Compromise to school mission was identified as the main factor that facilitates planning and action. The results of this study point to significant challenges for policymakers and school leaders. It also has relevant implications for future research related to school improvement.

Keywords: School improvement, strategy, strategic planning, qualitative study.

4.1. Introduction

School reforms in different parts of the world have mandated formal planning to support improvement (Agi, 2017; Al-Zboon & Hasan, 2012; Schlebusch & Mokhatle, 2016; Strunk, Marsh, Bush-Mecenas & Duque, 2016). Strategic planning and strategic action have been identified as valuable frameworks for school improvement (e.g., Davies, 2006, 2007; Eacott, 2008ab, 2011; Quong & Walker, 2010; Schlebusch & Mokhatle, 2016; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014). However, planning is not always fully embraced and knowledge-based, which raises questions about schools' efficacy on strategic planning and action processes (Cheng, 2011; Davies, 2004; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014).

Prevalent planning practices in schools are usually short-term, based on the immediate needs of the school (Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014), and the focus has been the accomplishment of externally driven requirements (Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019). In terms of structure, plans seem to be quite similar, typically with a listing of goals and strategies (Meyers & Hitt, 2018). The set of realistic goals and the design for monitoring the plans are also problematic (Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014). Besides, strategic plans tend to be elaborated by people who often are not involved in implementation what supports the need for involvement and participation of the whole school community from the start (Fernandez, 2011).

Previous research has identified processes for school improvement, taking into account, for example, the diverse school trajectories (e.g., Harris, 2010; Hopkins, Stringfield, Harris, Stoll & Mackay, 2014; Leithwood, Jantzi & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006). Three different types of improvement strategies can be identified: (i) short-term tactics, that represent specific actions intended to solve partial issues of school work with restricted goals; (ii) strategic approach,

that refers to changes that address different aspects of school work, with a focus on student learning and teachers' classroom work from a more comprehensive and medium-term perspective; (iii) capacity building, referring to schools where teachers work collaboratively, with a focus on improving teaching, distributed leadership is valued, and goals and conditions are created for continuous improvement (Gray et al., 1999).

Moreover, when considering plans quality, the comprehensive and integrated nature of the plans, its alignment with school vision, mission and priorities, the option for research-based strategies, a well-defined plan considering goals and implementation, a clear definition of a data-based and monitoring process, the community involvement and the provision of professional development opportunities should be regarded (e.g., Dunaway, Kim & Szad, 2012; Fernandez, 2011; Gurley, Peters, Collins & Fifolt, 2015; Immordino, Gigliotti, Ruben & Tromp, 2016; Strunk et al., 2016).

Taking all above, strategic planning and action are challenging for schools since it implies leaders vision, direction and knowledge, strategic thinking and deliberation, teachers participation and community involvement (Cheng, 2011, 2015; Davies & Davies, 2010; Eacott, 2011; Garza, Drysdale, Gurr, Jacobson & Merchant, 2014; Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013; Strunk et al., 2016; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014). One of the critical characteristics of strategic planning is the paradigm shift from short-term and crisis-driven planning approaches to broader strategic processes (Davies, 2003, 2006; Davies & Davies, 2006), supported by an integrated and holistic appraisal of a school's strengths and weaknesses that involves whole the school community (Davies & Davies, 2006; Cheng, 2010).

Some authors argued that most of the stakeholders lack knowledge about strategic planning and implementation processes, debating on questions like how to carry out planning, how to implementing plans, how to identify best-suited strategies, and how to evaluate it (Fernandez, 2011; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014). In that sense, it is important to develop a better understanding of strategic planning and action. This study is focused on the processes of school planning in Portuguese schools.

4.2. Method

4.2.1. Data context

The Portuguese educational reforms agendas, as in other countries, reflect the need of improving schools, both in processes and results (Bellei, Vanni, Valenzuela & Contreras, 2016; Chukwumah, 2015; Harris, 2010; Harris, Adams, Jones & Muniandy, 2015; Machado, 2017). Also, in Portugal, several school reform policies have mandated formal planning. For instance, quite recently, Portuguese schools were asked to elaborate and implement Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) for students' success improvement (Ministry of Education, 2016).

Specifically, the National Program for Academic Success Promotion, launched in 2016, is based on the idea that school communities are who best know their contexts, their difficulties, and strengths, and by that, they are who is better prepared to design strategic action plans at a school level with the intent of improving learning outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2016). With this initiative, Portuguese schools were invited to apply for financial support, with a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for academic success. SAP is defined as a tool to guide and structure actions related to the plan aims.

Some guidelines were provided for the priorities of SAPs at pedagogical (e.g., innovative pedagogical strategies, evaluation practices) and organizational levels (e.g., collaborative practices) and for SAPs' format and content (problem identification, beneficiaries, practice identification/name, goals, targets, indicators, activities, timeline, professionals involved, additional resources and need of professional development activities related to the project). There were also provided guidelines and support for the planning process.

A group of three people from each school received information and training during the planning process. Still, it was instructed for each school to ensure broad participation and dissemination on SAP elaboration and implementation. The SAPs were elaborated and approved in July 2016 and implemented since September 2016 in 663 Portuguese schools. In September 2018, it was expected that action plans were internalized in the school mission and project.

Therefore, it is important to analyze schools' planning processes in Portuguese schools, which is the focus of the present study. Specifically, we aim to explore: (i) planning, implementing and monitoring processes for school improvement, (ii) critical factors that can facilitate or hinder school planning and implementing plans and, (iii) perceived outcomes of plans for school improvement.

4.2.2. Participants and data collection

This study sought to explore how three Portuguese schools engaged in strategic action planning processes. A qualitative multiple-case design, based on instrumental cases (Stake, 2003), was employed to provide an in-depth understanding of the schools' and participants' experiences and to draw lessons

about successful strategic action plans. The purpose was not to generalize findings but to obtain relevant and useful information about strategic action plans processes.

As presented in table 4.1, the study engaged 24 participants from the three schools selected (coded by 570, 590, 669). The focus of the case studies was on strategic action plans (e.g., characteristics, processes, critical factors, perceived impacts). The selection criteria were based on the type of school (570, 590 - elementary to high school; 669 - vocational, educational and training school) and location (590 - urban; 570 - semi-urban; 669 - rural).

Table 4.1. Participants characteristics

Code	Gender	Age	Professional role
570_C1	Female	57	Project Coordinator
570_P	Female	60	Principal
570_T1	Female	46	Teacher
570_T2	Female	50	Teacher
570_T3	Female	56	Teacher
570_CFAE1	Female	46	Professional Development Center Coordinator
590_P	Female	62	Principal
590_C1	Female	53	Project Coordinator
590_C2	Female	65	Internal Evaluation Team Coordinator
590_T1	Female	64	Teacher
590_T2	Female	47	Teacher
590_T3	Female	52	Teacher
590_T4	Male	56	Teacher
669_P	Male	45	Principal
669_C1	Female	45	Project Coordinator
669_C2	Female	46	Internal Evaluation Team Coordinator
669_T1	Male	38	Teacher
669_T2	Female	39	Teacher
669_T3	Male	42	Teacher
669_T4	Female	36	Teacher
669_T5	Female	43	Teacher
669_T6	Male	38	Teacher
669_T7	Female	43	Teacher
669_T8	Female	39	Teacher

Data were collected within each school using multiple sources, including documents about the school, interviews with the principal and to the project coordinator, focus group discussions with teachers, and previous survey (cf. Carvalho, Cabral, Verdasca & Matias, submitted). Interviews, focus groups, and surveys were related to strategic action plans. Interviews and focus groups were semi-structured and with open-ended questions to allow participants the opportunity for deep reflection. The structure and content interviews were flexible. All the interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed so that no verbal information would be lost.

4.2.3. Data analysis

In our analysis of the data, we followed the six stages suggested by Creswell (2014). First, we organized data according to the school from where they were collected. Second, we read our data to understand it better, and in parallel, we kept notes about our thoughts. After that, we began examining our data for groups of meanings and tried to locate it in previous categories. Third, we continued the process of analysis and divided the data into categories (previous and emergent). Each part was named. Fourth, we reorganized categories by areas of analysis. Finally, in the fifth and sixth stages of the analysis, we began looking at our data to substantiate these categories with raw data. In trying to establish the trustworthiness of the data, we examined and triangulated our data from multiple angles and different perspectives (Creswell, 2014). NVivo 12 software was used to support data analysis.

This paper presents the results of a cross-case analysis conducted by the researchers.

4.3. Results

This section presents strategic school processes, critical factors for high-quality strategic action and planning, and perceived outcomes in the study schools.

4.3.1. Planning, implementing and monitoring processes

The study established that strategic action includes processes for planning, implementing, and monitoring activities. Participants referred to these three phases.

Planning processes were described in similar terms of what was prescribed by the Ministry of Education, including the identification of a restrict group of three persons for training, the elaboration of a proposal, the presentation and/or involvement of other teachers and other stakeholders in the planning phase and the submission of the plan for approval.

Starting by the way the plan was designed after we had training for that, we had limited time to do it, to elaborate the plan. Of course, the plan had revisions, but it was difficult. We know our school, but we didn't limit the elaboration of the plan to our ideas. We listened to our colleagues. We had meetings, not a lot, because we didn't have time. (669_C1)

For the elaboration of the plan, schools considered previous knowledge about the school and its specific needs, information about school project and principal' project, and actions that were already in implementation in the school.

From a specific time, when we have started this planning process, starting with our school project as a frame and with the identification of the school needs that could be solved with this plan, she [plan coordinator] and other colleagues designed the plan. (669_D1)

The participation of teachers and other stakeholders was also mentioned. Most of the participants referred to specific moments and ways of participation. Still, most of them mentioned that there were some limitations in this participation related to the moment of the school year and time for the planning process. This limited participation was also commented on concerning the implementation process.

After the plan conclusion, we made a presentation of the plan to our teachers. (669_C1)

Many teachers are involved in the activities and actions of the plan. There are activities that we had before the plan, and that involves many teachers that are working actively on it even though they don't know if this same action is from this plan or another plan. (669_C2)

Monitoring processes were also mentioned. The descriptions of these processes were incomplete, which seems to represent the monitoring processes itself. Some participants reported problems with monitorization, such as limited ways of doing it and limited time to do it.

We made some questionnaires to evaluate what they [students] have learned. Simple documents. We didn't have much time. Maybe if we had more time, we could make a more complete work (570_T1).

In some cases, these processes were presented as a bureaucratic way of accountability. In other cases, it was presented as an opportunity for school improvement.

It allowed each school to look inside herself. Despite the regulation of organizational evaluation for school improvement, the practices that are being used are focused more on school organization and less on students' success. This focus abled schools to look at their pedagogical

practices and what were the main implications for students' success (570_CFAE1).

4.3.2. Critical factors for high-quality strategic planning

Some critical factors for strategic action and planning were identified from participants' perspectives. These critical factors may facilitate or hinder strategic planning and action.

4.3.2.1. Professional development and training

Training for plans' elaboration is one of the factors mentioned. Participants agree that this is an important condition for planning and decision making. However, not all participants identified the training offered by the Ministry of Education as sufficient and adequate as necessary.

This plan started in a deficient way. The training was redundant. The trainer made what was supposed to; she came and replicated the training that she already had. (590_C1)

Training for plans' implementation was also mentioned as an important factor but not always offered on time and with the necessary quality for professional development related to the strategic plan.

One part of the plan was related to training but, because of the absence of financial support, training was stopped. This would be an added value. However, training came two years late, and when it came, the plan for two years needed to be implemented in six months (...). So, most of the training that was offered does not have any value and will not have an impact on the school, unless schools work on it (570_D1).

4.3.2.2. Human resources

Participants referred both the quantity and quality of human resources as a critical factor.

In this school, we had a big problem related to human resources because they were placed too late in the school year (...). Two teachers that were placed here by the Ministry of Education were two of the biggest disaster professionals. (669_D1)

The insufficient number of teachers and other professionals, the limited training offered at the time, and the inadequacy of some of the teachers selected were identified as factors that hinder plans' efficacy.

Some activities weren't concluded because of insufficient resources. If there are no teachers, there are no spaces. It can't be made. There is willingness, but there are no conditions to do it. (590_C2)

4.3.2.3. Teachers participation in planning and implementation processes

Teachers' participation and involvement in the planning process were referred to as an important factor that can influence the knowledge and validation of the plan, the compromise to plan implementation, and the sense of belonging to a school community. Most of the participants referred to the limited participation during the planning process due to deadlines for plan conclusion.

One of the big failures was related to teachers' participation in planning. At that time of the school year, beyond the planning team and pedagogical coordinators, it was unlikely that all teachers participate and contribute to plans. (570_CFAE1).

Despite these limitations, schools made efforts to offer opportunities to present and discuss the plans.

The plan went to pedagogical departments to decide what to consider in the plan. The plan resulted from the goodwill of our principal. The other colleagues gave support. (590_T1)

4.3.2.4. Teachers collaboration for school improvement

One other factor referred to concerning plans' implementation was the collaboration between teachers. Most of the participants identified it as a facilitator for plans' implementation and monitoring.

It is fantastic to work in a group. Other colleagues suggest other ideas. When we had started, we wanted to do this, but then we wanted to do more. So we end much more involved, and we involve students. The positive aspect is also the conviviality between colleagues. We need to have trust and be open to criticism. (669_T1)

4.3.2.5. Compromise to school improvement

Compromise to school improvement emerged as a critical factor. Most of the participants connected this compromise to perceived outcomes.

The school struggled and bought material (...). The big struggle from the schools to maintain the plan even though the absence of financial support for the necessary resources. (570_D1)

We have willingness and practices that abled mobilization to other situations (570_D1).

Many teachers are involved in activities and actions of the plan (...) they actively work in these processes. (669_T2).

4.3.3. Perceived outcomes

When questioned directly about the impacts of these plans on students' success or school improvement, participants referred limited outcomes.

However, when talking about specific processes and activities, participants were able to identify related changes, mostly in school and professional improvement.

So, there are very different efficacy degrees when comparing actions proposed (...) The strength of this plan were the practices that the school needed to develop. (570_D1)

The strength of this plan is what students learn. (570_T2)

This plan was an opportunity to build a baseline to start the possible paths for our school. (669_C2)

I think this is the bottom line to improve our school (570_T3).

In that sense, these plans were an opportunity to change teachers' visions about schools and teachers' practices.

4.4. Discussion and conclusions

This study examines strategic school processes, critical factors for high-quality strategic action and planning, and perceived outcomes of plans in Portuguese schools. The findings indicate that schools analyzed have embraced strategic action plans, despite the difficulties encountered during the planning and implementing processes.

At first, school leaders viewed strategic action plans as an external ministerial policy that should be managed by schools, but, at the same time, they viewed these plans as an opportunity for financial support. During the implementation process, they find it as an opportunity for school change, considering both perspectives and practices. It is to note that participants' perspectives are much more negative and focused on difficulties and limitations than in positive aspects. However, all the participants were able to identify strengths and outcomes from these plans.

When presenting strategic processes, participants have more precise ideas of what and how the planning and implementing occur than of the monitoring process.

In the planning process, participants identified difficulties related to the knowledge about how to do it and to the conditions to do it, which may have contributed to the centralization of plans design in a small team of three persons and the limited participation of teachers and other stakeholders. As asserted by Wanjala & Rarieya (2014), the knowledge about strategic action and strategic planning, the nature of its processes, the previous conditions to use it and to have the skills for planning in this manner are essential. Strategic planning is not a guarantee of high-quality strategic action for school improvement, but it is a necessary condition for well-succeeded actions (Davies, 2006, 2007; Eacott, 2008a, 2011; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019). The planning processes described have missed out critical conditions such as the intentional alignment between long term school plans and this short term plan, the teachers' involvement, and the necessary knowledge for plans design, especially on what to consider monitoring processes. This leads to the argument that educational reforms that mandate school plans for improvement must be accompanied by the essential conditions that support plans elaboration and implementation (Strunk et al., 2016; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014).

Implementation processes were mostly discussed concerning insufficient resources. At the start, there was an expectation that these plans would have financial support and resources. This expectation has failed, which was associated with limitations in the execution of specific activities. One other aspect extensively discussed when talking about implementation processes was

professional development opportunities related to plans. Participants referred to the limited opportunities they had on the time.

Five critical factors were identified: (i) professional development opportunities; (ii) human resources; (iii) teachers participation in planning and implementing processes; (iv) teachers collaboration for school improvement and; (v) compromise to school improvement. These factors may operate as facilitators or barriers for plans planning and implementation.

Other studies indicate that financial support and resources play an important role in ensuring plans' implementation (e.g., Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014). Sources of funding and resources in the three schools were limited and did not cover school needs. The Ministry of Education externally and centrally controlled human resources placement. Schools depended on an external decision and action to place teachers and other human resources where and when necessary, which did not meet school expectations and needs.

One important condition is professional development and training. However, the prior capacity-building for strategic planning in schools was insufficient to enable school leaders and other professionals with the necessary knowledge to design and collectively reflect on the plans. The Ministry of Education provided short training to a selected team from each school, employing a cascading model. However, this training was of a short time, at the end of the school year, and only for a specific group, leaving out other professionals from it and without sufficient time to be disseminated in the schools. This kind of training is being criticized because it is prescriptive and ineffective (cf. Xaba, 2006).

Another important condition is making participation and collaboration a daily routine in schools (Carpenter, 2018; Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013). A key known element for high-quality school plans is the active and meaningful

involvement and commitment of teachers and other schools' actors (Garza et al., 2014; Hajisoteriou, Karousiou & Angelides, 2018; Louis & Lee, 2016; Pashiardis, 1994; Strunk et al., 2016). As asserted by Hajisoteriou et al. (2018),

By giving them [teachers] the opportunity to share their ideas and values and treat them as reflective practitioners, we unveil their perceptions, what they believe, perceive, and think about different areas that could eventually assist in the improvement of the school setting. (p. 2)

Strategic action plans, as elaborated by schools considered, wasn't supported on this active participation and meaningful involvement. Schools made efforts to inform and collect contributions, but this was limited by the deadlines and the number of tasks at the end of the school year.

Despite difficulties and challenges related to strategic action plans, compromise to the school mission seems to emerge as the *top* condition for maintaining and implementing the plan. Principals, other school leaders, and teachers mentioned willingness, effort, and previous practices as factors that influenced plans elaboration and execution. This resonates in the idea that strategic planning, within a strategic framework, "should be a declaration of a school's dedication to ongoing improvement" (Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014, p.19), which is impressive when considering that participants highlighted that these plans were an opportunity to rethink school perspectives and practices.

This study deepens our understanding of strategic action processes for school improvement. Using a case study approach, it provided a contextually embedded description of strategic planning and implementation, and it also clarified specific mechanisms of internal school organization for improvement. Although each case had its contextual specificity, we consider that these cases have important implications for policy and practice.

One important implication that can be derived from this study is that policymakers need to play a key role in building capacities and conditions in schools to effectively implement educational reforms. These reforms, though usually well intended, are poorly implemented (Xaba, 2006), raising questions about its efficacy. Leaders and teachers' professional development is a necessary task to be taken when considering strategic action and planning. As stated by Wanjala & Rarieya (2014), "learning should be the starting point for schools effectively engaging in strategic planning" (p.26). Training, as part of the strategic action for schools' improvement, should adopt a whole-school learning approach and reinforce real engagement in professional development and collaboration opportunities (Bush, 2018; Day et al., 2011; Wanjala & Rarieya, 2014).

Despite its mentioned limitations, these educational reforms may have the potential to rethink actual schools' state and change needs. Create need and motivation for change may be seen as an important contribution of this national program, considering all the subsequent legal changes in education in Portugal. Fullan (1982) writes that "educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as simple and as complex as that" (p. 108). We may say that the National Program for Academic Success Promotion uncovered paths for change when explicitly identified national priorities and stimulated schools to present strategic action plans. Even though the limited financial support and resources, schools' compromise to its mission and improvement seemed to function as the motor of change. It can be argued that change and improvement occur much more from the inside of the school, by its actors, rather than by external impositions (Hajisoteriou et al., 2017; Gurley et al., 2015). This provides a

challenge for policymakers and school leaders to focus on creating conditions for teachers and other stakeholders' involvement and compromise to school.

From this study, we can also derive implications for future research. As mentioned by Jarl, Andersson & Blossing (2017), “in the search for variables explaining school success, close-up studies [such as case studies] of decision-making processes and patterns of action and interaction in schools are preferable” (p.20). However, the same authors suggest that case studies made use of a strategic selection of cases, making it possible systematic comparisons based on variations, and also the possibility of test case study results using large-scale quantitative methods. These are valuable suggestions for future studies related to school strategic action plans. Even though in this study, the schools and participants selection were purposive and case comparisons were accomplished, specific assumptions for strategic selection and systematic comparisons between successful and failing schools were not possible.

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Conclusão

O objetivo nuclear desta tese foi contribuir para a construção de um modelo conceptual que sustente a ação estratégica nas escolas, dando seguimento a trabalhos prévios que se inscrevem nesta linha de investigação (e.g., Ali, 2012, 2018; Chan, 2018; Davies & Davies, 2010; Eacott, 2010ab, 2011). Estes trabalhos põem em evidência a necessidade de um modelo compreensivo, contextualizado e integrado de análise, que considere a complexidade inerente à ação estratégica (Cheng, 2015; Eacott, 2011) bem como o seu carácter processual e provisório, decorrente nas necessidades e características específicas dos contextos e das pessoas (Davies & Davies, 2010; Eacott, 2011). Destacam-se duas dimensões que parecem ser fundamentais para a qualidade da ação estratégica: a intencionalidade e a participação (Costa, 2003; Cheng, 2015; Eacott, 2010a). Pensar e construir a escola implica considerar uma visão de futuro intencionalmente espelhada na direção a seguir e tendo por base uma lógica de participação, envolvimento e implicação. Como afirma Costa (2003),

é neste sentido que a procura de sentido, a clarificação da direcção a seguir, uma certa visão do futuro, se construídas e partilhadas colectivamente pelos membros da organização – ou seja, a ideia de elaborar um projecto da organização e fazer da organização um projecto –, têm vindo a ser apontadas como um dos contributos importantes (não certamente a solução miraculosa!) para a renovação e a requalificação das organizações contemporâneas. (p. 1326)

De forma intimamente relacionada com o conceito de estratégia aparece o conceito de liderança estratégica. Esta tende a ser concebida não como um modelo teórico de liderança, a par dos diversos e múltiplos modelos de liderança, mas como uma característica central em qualquer ação de liderança (Davies &

Davies, 2004, 2006; Eacott, 2010a, 2011). Diversos trabalhos aqui considerados situam-se, sobretudo, na linha de investigação acerca da liderança estratégica, pondo em evidência características, ações e desafios que se colocam aos líderes na perspetiva da ação estratégica (e.g. Ali, 2012, 2018; Chan, 2017; Chen, 2008; Davies & Davies, 2005, 2010; Eacott, 2010bc, 2011; Ismail, Kanesan & Muhammad, 2018; Khumalo, 2018).

No seu conjunto, estes trabalhos assinalam a necessidade de se explorarem as práticas de liderança numa perspetiva estratégica, destacando-se variáveis de processo e de produto relacionadas, que possam informar a ação nos contextos e dos profissionais. Trata-se, sobretudo, de conhecer os modos de pensar e de fazer nas escolas para a melhoria e eficácia das mesmas. Esta questão, de carácter conceptual, assume particular relevo no contexto nacional, considerando o conjunto de medidas e de programas de promoção do sucesso e de inclusão lançadas em Portugal, nos últimos anos, e que justificam uma leitura compreensiva, contextualizada, intencional e participada inerente à ação estratégica.

O trabalho de investigação que aqui se apresentou foi motivado pelo interesse em conhecer especificamente a ação desenvolvida nas escolas tendo em vista a elaboração de Planos de Ação Estratégica, no âmbito do Programa Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar. A opção pelo quadro conceptual anterior foi instigada, por um lado, pela nomenclatura usada nos documentos de suporte ao Programa Nacional de Promoção de Sucesso Escolar bem como pelas orientações apresentadas nestes documentos e, por outro lado, pelas necessidades de investigação em Ciências da Educação, identificadas na literatura acerca da ação estratégica nas escolas. Partindo deste quadro, formulamos uma questão geral e quatro subquestões de investigação, que

orientaram o processo de investigação aqui apresentado em quatro estudos principais. Nesta conclusão, sistematizamos os dados obtidos, procurando responder às questões de investigação formuladas.

Como se caracterizam os PAEs em termos de problemas de partida, objetivos, tipologia de ações e públicos-alvo?

Uma das questões colocadas centra-se no conteúdo dos planos de ação estratégica, procurando conhecer as características dos mesmos em termos de problemas de partida, objetivos, tipologia de ações e públicos-alvo. Em fase de projeto pretendia-se realizar a análise de conteúdo da totalidade dos PAEs das escolas portuguesas para conhecer as características dos mesmos. Contudo, a análise exploratória de cerca de 100 PAEs, adotando princípios de amostragem e saturação teórica (cf. Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2005), permitiu identificar as suas características principais em termos das variáveis referidas. Em conjunto com os relatórios produzidos pela estrutura de missão, nomeada pelo Ministério de Educação para acompanhar este programa, (cf. Verdasca et al., 2019), pareceu-nos suficiente para um melhor conhecimento do conteúdo dos mesmos. Decorrente desta análise, e informados pela literatura científica, optamos pela caracterização dos planos de ação estratégica em termos de qualidade, atendendo a um conjunto de indicadores previamente identificados, respondendo à questão de investigação relativa à qualidade dos PAEs, que apresentaremos abaixo. Por este motivo, não elaboramos artigo/capítulo relativo a esta questão, tendo enunciado os dados principais no artigo relativo ao capítulo 2 desta tese.

Da análise exploratória dos PAEs, apesar de identificada alguma variabilidade entre os planos, foi possível organizar categorias de análise para

as diferentes dimensões elencadas. Os problemas de partida, os objetivos e as atividades são as dimensões mais claras e explícitas. Globalmente, os PAEs identificam claramente os problemas de partida e os recursos necessários, alinhando as propostas com as prioridades estabelecidas pelo Ministério de Educação (e.g., mudança na organização da escola e da sala de aula, melhoria na colaboração entre professores e reforço das práticas de supervisão).

Quanto aos problemas de partida, os PAEs elencam problemas relacionados com os alunos (e.g., dificuldades de aprendizagem, indisciplina, desmotivação, condição social), com os resultados escolares (e.g., resultados académicos, resultados sociais) e com os professores (e.g., pouco trabalho colaborativo, ausência de práticas de supervisão, práticas pedagógicas pouco ajustadas). Os objetivos formulados nos PAEs relacionam-se com os alunos (e.g., melhorar desempenho académico, aumentar a motivação e o envolvimento), com os professores (e.g., melhorar práticas pedagógicas, reforçar o trabalho colaborativo), com os resultados escolares (e.g., melhorar os resultados académicos, melhorar os resultados sociais) e com a organização escolar (e.g., aumentar a quantidade e a qualidade de serviços e de estruturas). Quanto à tipologia de ações, globalmente, dirigem-se aos alunos (e.g., medidas de apoio), aos professores (e.g., trabalho em equipa, supervisão, desenvolvimento profissional) e à organização escolar (e.g., recursos).

Quanto a outras dimensões, os PAEs parecem confusos e pouco coerentes. Por exemplo, quanto aos mecanismos de monitorização e de avaliação, muito embora se identifiquem indicadores, mecanismos e instrumentos, frequentemente estes não se alinham com os objetivos propostos, confundem-se entre si e não parecem responder às necessidades de monitorização do PAE em questão. A análise exploratória realizada é

convergente com os resultados, evidências e recomendações da estrutura de missão responsável pelo acompanhamento do programa em questão (cf. Verdasca et al., 2019).

Estes dados levantam algumas questões relacionadas com a qualidade dos planos de ação, quer em termos do processo de elaboração, implementação e avaliação, quer em termos de conteúdo e opções realizadas. Compreender o modo *como* e *se* os PAEs foram intencionalmente desenhados, envolvendo diferentes elementos da escola e da comunidade e adotando ações contextualizadas mas devidamente sustentadas empiricamente são relevantes em termos de melhoria e eficácia das escolas e do sucesso dos alunos. Nos estudos 3 e 4 procuramos contribuir para uma melhor compreensão do processo de construção e concretização dos PAEs, conforme apresentamos nos capítulos 3 e 4. Não foi alvo deste trabalho o estudo da tipologia de ações adotada, considerando-se a relevância de estudos futuros de sistematização das ações propostas atendendo a variáveis críticas na aprendizagem dos alunos (e.g., Hattie, 2013), de identificação das ações sustentadas em evidência e respetivos fatores críticos considerados (e.g., Thessin, 2015) ou de avaliação de impacto das ações na aprendizagem dos alunos ou noutras variáveis consideradas relevantes como o desenvolvimento profissional docente ou a eficácia da escola (e.g., Prasertcharoensuk & Tang, 2017). Estes aspetos são considerados como indicadores de qualidade de planos de ação/melhoria das escolas (Fernandez, 2011; Strunk, Marsh, Bush-Mecenas & Duque, 2016), o que aumenta a relevância do estudo destas dimensões no contexto da ação estratégica.

Quais os indicadores de qualidade considerados no planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?

Ainda quanto às características dos PAEs, procuramos conhecer que indicadores de qualidade estão presentes nos mesmos. A análise exploratória do conteúdo dos PAEs pôs em evidência algumas das suas fragilidades designadamente a confusão na distinção e, conseqüentemente, na definição de objetivos, metas e atividades, a indistinção entre atividades e condições necessárias ao desenvolvimento das atividades, a confusão e/ou ausência de indicadores e meios de verificação para monitorização, a incoerência e/ou desarticulação entre problemas, objetivos, metas, atividades e a aparente ausência de sustentação das ações em evidência empírica. Estas fragilidades parecem ser reveladoras da falta de conhecimento por parte dos profissionais acerca do modo como se elaboram planos de ação/melhoria intencionalmente pensados e organizados e dos aspetos cruciais para a qualidade dos mesmos (Fernandez, 2011; Strunk et al., 2016), mas também da insuficiente divulgação científica do conhecimento relevante em termos de qualidade e eficácia das ações/medidas a adotar para o sucesso escolar dos alunos e melhoria das escolas (Thessin, 2015). Daqui decorre a necessidade de se identificarem indicadores de qualidade dos PAEs e de se proceder a uma análise dos mesmos em função destes indicadores.

No capítulo 2 identificamos um conjunto de indicadores de qualidade que utilizamos para avaliação dos PAEs, a saber: (i) Alinhamento entre o plano, a visão/missão da escola e as prioridades nacionais; (ii) Adequação à população escolar e respetivo contexto; (iii) Caráter compreensivo; (iv) Existência de objetivos SMART; (v) Opção por estratégias, ações, medidas baseadas em evidência; (vi) Envolvimento das famílias e comunidade; (vii) Especificação de mecanismos de implementação; (viii) Especificação de mecanismos de monitorização e de tomada de decisão baseada em dados e; (iv) Previsão de

ações de desenvolvimento profissional que respondam às especificidades do plano desenhado.

A análise realizada permitiu verificar que os PAEs se apresentam alinhados, sobretudo, com algumas das prioridades nacionais (e.g., intervenção em anos iniciais de ciclo, reforço do trabalho colaborativo e uso de estratégias de diferenciação pedagógica), o que se evidencia nos objetivos e ações propostas. Além disso, a globalidade dos PAEs apresentam as ações a desenvolver e especificam mecanismos de implementação. Estes são aspectos relevantes a assinalar em termos de qualidade. Contudo, os PAEs são frágeis quanto à justificação das opções realizadas, ficando por esclarecer se as mesmas se adequam/respondem às necessidades dos alunos e dos contextos e/ou se se baseiam em evidência e em dados. Do mesmo modo, e apesar da referência à monitorização e à capacitação nos PAEs, não fica clara a existência de planos coerentes, articulados e consistentes de avaliação e de monitorização das ações, nem de planos integrados de desenvolvimento profissional devidamente alinhados com o teor do respetivo PAE.

De acordo com o referido, os PAEs parecem apresentar-se, sobretudo, como uma descrição ou listagem de ações a desenvolver, o que não induz ou traduz a qualidade de implementação das mesmas. Muito embora a existência de um plano, mesmo que de qualidade, não se constitua em si mesmo a garantia de qualidade da sua implementação e, menos ainda, a garantia do sucesso dos alunos e da melhoria das escolas, pode constituir-se como uma ferramenta importante de suporte ao pensamento e ação estratégicos (Davies, 2006, 2007; Eacott, 2008, 2011; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019). Para isso, importa que a elaboração do mesmo seja intencionalmente organizada atendendo aos diversos indicadores de qualidade apontados. Em especial, importa que assuma um

caráter participado e articulado, informado por conhecimento relevante, e contextualizado nas características e necessidades das pessoas e dos contextos nas suas variadas dimensões.

Como se concretizou o processo de planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs, designadamente quanto aos processos de tomada de decisão adotados?

Para além das questões relacionadas com o conteúdo dos PAEs, levantaram-se questões relativas ao processo de planeamento e de implementação dos PAEs. Partindo do quadro teórico acerca da ação estratégica, identificamos três áreas centrais a considerar em termos de processo: (i) direção ou sentido da ação; (ii) pensamento e intencionalidade estratégicos e; (iii) participação e envolvimento (e.g. Cheng, 2015; Costa & Figueiredo, 2013; Day et al., 2009; Davies & Davies, 2010; Eacott, 2011; Garza, Drysdale, Gurr, Jacobson & Merchant, 2014; Strunk et al., 2016). Foi dada especial relevância à participação e envolvimento dos profissionais nos processos de decisão subjacentes ao planeamento bem como nos processos de implementação e monitorização dos PAEs. Assumimos a conceção de que a participação e envolvimento dos profissionais e da comunidade mais alargada no planeamento de ações, não sendo condição única, é um pré-requisito para o sucesso do processo de planeamento e de implementação (Ismail et al., 2018; Labée et al., 2015; Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014; Myende & Bhengu, 2015). Adotamos a perspetiva do planeamento estratégico como um processo colaborativo de construção, que faz parte integrante da ação estratégica (e.g., Cheng, 2011; Davies, 2004; Eacott, 2008; Leithwooth, Jantzi & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006; Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014).

A exploração das dimensões acima permitiu-nos identificar um conjunto de variáveis capazes de informar o processo de planeamento e de implementação dos PAEs, a saber:

(i) Conhecimento: grau de conhecimento que os participantes têm acerca dos PAEs em geral e do PAE da/o respetiva/o escola/agrupamento em particular;

(ii) Participação: grau de participação e envolvimento de diferentes intervenientes no PAE do respetivo agrupamento, incluindo a participação dos docentes, dos alunos e dos encarregados de educação;

(iii) Tomada de decisão: características e mecanismos subjacentes ao processo de decisão no âmbito dos PAEs;

(iv) Sentido de autoria: grau em que os participantes reconhecem o seu contributo pessoal no PAE do respetivo agrupamento;

(v) Validade reconhecida: grau de reconhecimento e valorização dos PAEs em termos de melhoria dos resultados dos alunos e de melhoria das escolas.

Estas variáveis foram consideradas na construção dos questionários construídos para efeitos de recolha de dados, conforme apresentado no capítulo 3.

Focando-nos nos processos de planeamento, implementação e monitorização dos PAEs, os dados parecem indicar que o grau de participação dos profissionais foi moderado a alto, variando em função da fase do processo. Os professores foram, especialmente, envolvidos na fase de implementação dos PAEs, decorrente da necessidade de execução das ações previstas. Em fase de planeamento, verificou-se uma maior participação de grupos específicos, designados para o efeito, ou uma participação formal decorrente de

responsabilidades/cargos ou pertença a grupos disciplinares. Este dado revê-se na análise das diferenças de participação em função dos cargos de liderança dos profissionais, verificando-se que aqueles que têm cargos de liderança tendem a referir maiores níveis de participação nos processos de planeamento e de implementação. São também estes que apresentam um maior conhecimento acerca dos PAEs, que lhes reconhecem valor e validade e que reconhecem autoria pessoal nos mesmos.

Estes resultados corroboram estudos anteriores de acordo com os quais o processo de planeamento e ação estratégica bem-sucedido é necessariamente de natureza participativa e colaborativa (e.g., Day et al., 2009; Cheng, 2011; Davies, 2004; Eacott, 2008; Leithwooth et al., 2006; Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014). O envolvimento dos diferentes intervenientes no processo, através de relações de confiança, amplia o sentido de pertença e de autoria e aumenta a conceção de validade e de valor dos planos (e.g., Garza et al., 2014; Hajisoteriou, Karousiou & Angelides, 2018; Ismail et al, 2018; Louis & Lee, 2016; Myende & Bhengu, 2015; Strunk et al., 2016). Deste modo, o envolvimento dos profissionais tem potencial de mobilização no sentido da ação/direção, desde que devidamente intencionalizado. Este nem sempre parece ter sido o caso no que diz respeito à elaboração dos PAEs das escolas portuguesas, o que justificaria uma leitura das condições, momentos, conhecimento procedimental, conhecimento científico, orientações e suporte existentes bem como das características da escola, das lideranças e dos profissionais em termos de estratégia, para uma melhor compreensão dos processos em estudo. Ainda assim, assumida a estratégia como uma forma de pensar a escola, que articula necessariamente visão/missão, planos de longo prazo e planos de médio/curto prazo, numa lógica de participação e envolvimento, talvez possamos especular

acerca da parca intencionalidade subjacente aos PAEs. Estando o sentido de ação/direção e a devida intencionalidade presentes na rotina da escola e dos profissionais bem como os mecanismos de participação e colaboração presentes e automatizados, a elaboração de planos de curto prazo, como consideramos serem os PAEs (cf. Eacott, 2007), configuraria facilmente uma ação emergente das necessidades e características do contexto, resultado de trabalho conjunto de longo prazo, intencional e articulado. Conforme os dados que apresentamos, este não parece ter sido o processo conseguido na elaboração dos PAEs.

Quais os fatores críticos ao planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs?

Interessava-nos identificar fatores críticos da ação estratégica, neste estudo, refletidos no processo de planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação dos PAEs. Os estudos levados a cabo contribuem para a identificação dos fatores críticos. Contudo, os estudos 2 e 4 são particularmente úteis na compreensão deste aspeto.

Assinalamos anteriormente três aspetos que nos parecem essenciais: (i) direção/sentido de ação; (ii) pensamento e intencionalidade estratégicas e; (iii) participação e envolvimento dos profissionais. Do nosso ponto de vista, estas dimensões incorporam os aspetos essenciais dos modelos propostos por autores que aqui consideramos de referência (Davies, 2006, 2007; Davies & Davies, 2010; Eacott, 2008, 2011) bem como de diversos estudos empíricos relevantes acerca da estratégia e da liderança estratégica nas escolas (cf. capítulo 1). Além disso, incorporam os diferentes indicadores de qualidade que identificamos previamente no estudo 2 (cf. capítulo 2) bem como os fatores críticos que apresentamos no estudo 4 (cf. capítulo 4).

A direção ou sentido de ação estabelece o estado futuro desejado, determinando de forma explícita e deliberada os planos em curso (Eacott, 2007, 2010ab). Por conseguinte, reflete-se no alinhamento conseguido entre a visão de futuro e os planos desenhados. O sentido de ação é necessariamente informado pelas políticas educativas e prioridades nacionais, pelas características e necessidades dos contextos e populações e pelas concepções dos intervenientes e comunidades. A título de exemplo, vejamos o trabalho de Eacott (2011), onde destaca a influência das forças sociais, políticas, históricas e culturais no comportamento dos líderes e das escolas. Os planos de ação das escolas têm necessariamente que refletir a complexidade contextual e, por isso, adotar um caráter compreensivo e integrado que responda à população escolar e respetivo contexto, alinhando-se com a visão/missão da escola.

Decorrente do anterior, a intencionalidade é uma dimensão crucial da ação estratégica, garantindo as condições necessárias à concretização da missão da escola. Por conseguinte, os planos de ação das escolas devem ser informados por dados relevantes acerca da escola, da população escolar e da comunidade e por evidência científica que sustente opções adequadas, coerentes, relevantes e eficazes (Thessin, 2015). A formulação dos objetivos do plano, a opção por estratégias, ações e medidas, a definição dos mecanismos de implementação, avaliação e monitorização e a previsão de mecanismos de desenvolvimento profissional coerentes com as opções do plano decorrem necessariamente da intencionalidade estratégica, articulando-se entre si e com outros aspetos relevantes.

A tradução da direção/sentido em ação implica necessariamente a participação dos profissionais, dos alunos, das famílias e da comunidade. Não ignorando o papel de outros elementos, o foco deste trabalho foi na participação

dos professores no planeamento e implementação de ações. Já aqui destacamos a relevância do envolvimento dos profissionais no processo na linha de outros autores (e.g., Cheng, 2011; Davies, 2004; Eacott, 2008; Leithwooth et al., 2006; Mbugua & Rarieya, 2014). Resta-nos reforçar a necessidade das escolas fazerem da colaboração e da participação uma rotina.

No conjunto, a sistematização anterior permite-nos uma melhor compreensão de como se concretiza a ação estratégica, em especial, das escolas portuguesas através instrumentos operacionais de promoção do sucesso escolar como os Planos de Ação Estratégica (questão geral de investigação). Além disso, permite identificar pistas para a ação estratégica nas escolas, contribuindo para a consolidação de modelos conceptuais de suporte à prática. Tendo por base estes contributos, a figura 5.1 representa graficamente as dimensões principais da estratégia nas escolas, alinhando-se com uma perspetiva *contextualizada e humanizada* (Eacott, 2011). Não se trata aqui de apresentar uma representação exaustiva dos constructos em estudo, mas de identificar algumas das suas dimensões identificadas como relevantes neste trabalho, oferecendo alguns contributos para a investigação e prática neste domínio.

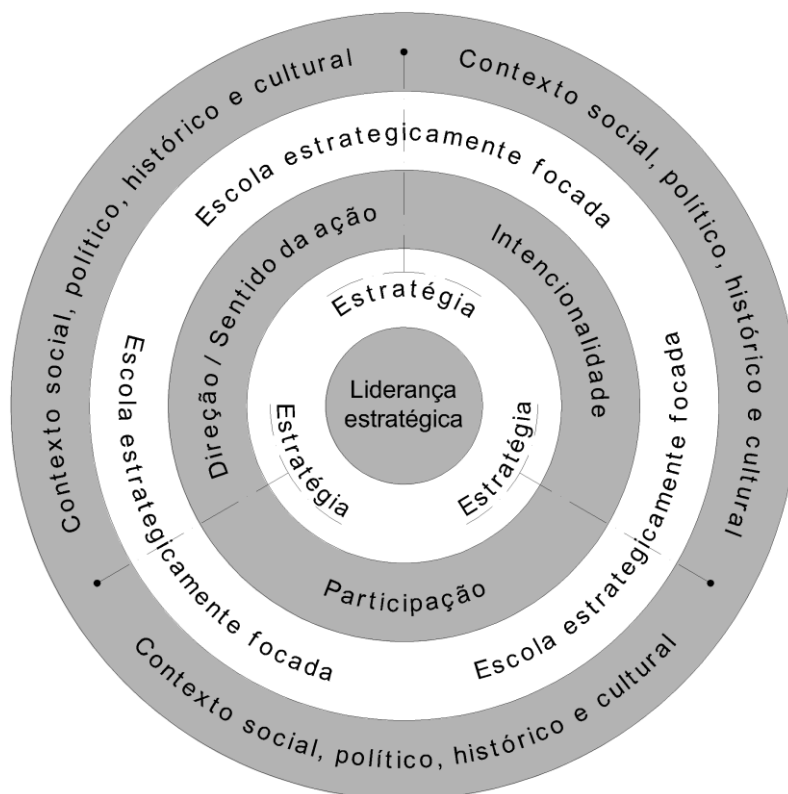


Figura 5.1. Dimensões da ação estratégica nas escolas.

Do ponto de vista das implicações para a prática, destaca-se a necessidade de se estimular o desenvolvimento de escolas estrategicamente focadas (Davies & Davies, 2006), suportadas em práticas de liderança mobilizadoras de ação e melhoria (Day et al., 2009), criando-se condições, oportunidades e desafios às escolas e aos profissionais reforçadoras de práticas estrategicamente focadas. Neste mesmo sentido, a consolidação de redes de suporte internas e externas, que facilitem a troca de saberes e experiências, pode ser uma oportunidade para se pensarem práticas de ação estratégica.

A formação de líderes, incluindo diretores de escolas/agrupamentos, líderes intermédios e outros elementos de referência nas escolas, é uma condição necessária. Consideramos que este processo de formação deve inscrever-se num plano de desenvolvimento profissional integrado e articulado,

por exemplo, envolvendo os Centros de Formação de Associação de Escolas em parceria com universidades, estimulando-se processos de investigação-ação (Alves, Cabral & Bolívar, in press; Bush 2018; Day et al., 2011; Machado & Formosinho, 2019; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Orr & Orphanos, 2011).

No seguimento do anterior, a construção de referenciais e linhas de orientação, sustentados em evidência empírica, que suportem a ação estratégica de longo, médio e curto prazo nas suas diversas fases (planeamento, implementação, monitorização e avaliação) e múltiplas questões pode constituir-se como uma ferramenta de grande utilidade no desenvolvimento profissional dos líderes e de outros profissionais (Cabral, Alves, Cunha & Bolívar, in press; Costa & Figueiredo, 2013; Tintoré, 2016).

Há, também, a destacar a necessidade de reforço da participação, envolvimento e compromisso dos diversos atores (profissionais, alunos, famílias) e da comunidade mais alargada, valorizando-se esforços e iniciativas de aproximação e de cooperação a propósito dos diferentes aspetos da vida da escola e da comunidade (Day et al., 2009; Garza et al., 2014; Hajisoteriou et al., 2018; Louis & Lee, 2016; Strunk et al., 2016). O estímulo ao trabalho colaborativo e à consolidação de processos de tomada de decisão participativos, através da criação de oportunidades e condições para que este processo se desenvolva e se transforme em rotina (Carpenter, 2018; Cheng, 2011; Day et al., 2009; Seghal, Nambudiri & Mishra, 2018), é central na ação estratégica.

Finalmente, é de relembrar a necessidade de disseminação de conhecimento científico relativo aos processos de planeamento estratégico, a medidas/ações/práticas sustentadas em evidência e a fatores críticos da ação estratégica, nomeadamente através de parcerias entre as escolas e as universidades para o desenvolvimento de projetos conjuntos de produção e

disseminação de conhecimento (Fernandez, 2011; Strunk et al., 2016; Thessin, 2015).

Salvaguardadas as devidas limitações deste trabalho, já reportadas nos capítulos relativos aos estudos que o compõem, destacam-se ainda implicações para a investigação futura. Muito embora se identifique na literatura um quadro teórico de suporte à compreensão da estratégia e da liderança estratégica, a investigação acerca destes constructos é limitada (cf. capítulo 1).

Justifica-se a realização de estudos futuros centrados nas variáveis que compõem os constructos em análise, em relação com variáveis sociodemográficas, psicológicas e organizacionais relevantes. A título de exemplo, retomemos o trabalho de Eacott (2010), no qual se estuda o efeito de variáveis demográficas, tais como o número de anos de experiência num dado cargo ou o número de anos de experiência em diferentes cargos/posições, na liderança estratégica. As especificidades inerentes ao profissional e ao contexto são dimensões relevantes a explorar para uma melhor compreensão dos processos e efeitos da ação nas escolas.

Consideramos também urgente a realização de estudos de avaliação do impacto das práticas de liderança ou de variáveis relacionadas com a estratégia na melhoria dos resultados dos alunos ou na mudança organizacional. Na linha de outros trabalhos (e.g., Day et al., 2009; Hopkins, Stringfield, Harris, Stoll & Mackay, 2014; Prasertcharoensuk & Tang, 2017), importa ampliar o conhecimento acerca das variáveis explicativas dos efeitos da estratégia e das práticas de liderança. A este propósito, alguns trabalhos têm vindo a explorar o papel da confiança relacional no contexto da liderança e da melhoria das escolas (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Edwards-Groves, Grootenboer & Ronnerman, 2016; Weinstein, Raczynski & Peña, 2020). Este parece-nos um aspeto de relevo

a explorar, atendendo a alguns dos resultados obtidos no nosso estudo, nomeadamente quanto à relação entre a participação dos professores na elaboração de planos de ação, o sentido de autoria relativo aos mesmos e o valor que lhes atribuem.

Finalmente, a realização de estudos de carácter longitudinal que relacionem a ação estratégica com a melhoria organizacional em diferentes tipos de escolas, considerando diversos fatores críticos, podem ser particularmente úteis, por um lado, para a consolidação de modelos teóricos acerca da ação estratégica em educação e, por outro lado, para melhor informar as práticas dos profissionais e das escolas.

Entendemos que o mérito deste trabalho se situa, particularmente, na sistematização dos dados acerca da ação estratégica no contexto da liderança estratégica, podendo servir de base à construção de modelos conceptuais de suporte às práticas das escolas e de inspiração para o trabalho dos seus profissionais. Concluimos afirmando com Burns (2003, p. 2, cit. In Tintoré, 2017) “we don’t call for *good* leadership – we expect, or at least hope, that it will be good. Bad leadership implies *no* leadership. I contend that there is nothing neutral about leadership; it is valued as a moral necessity”.

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