



Сравнительное исследование моделей карьерного роста руководителей школ в странах БРИКС

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Введение. В представленном исследовании раскрыты модели развития карьеры руководителей школ в странах БРИКС (Бразилия, Россия, Индия, Китай и Южная Африка). Важность исследования заключается во вкладе результатов в решение проблемы трансформации системы российского образования для решения задач XXI века. Результаты исследования раскрывают особенности роли стратегического лидерства в повышении качества преподавания, образовательных результатов обучающихся и организационной эффективности образовательной организации.

Материалы и методы исследования. В исследовании используется сравнительный анализ данных, объединяющий обзор литературы, тематические исследования и анализ официальных интернет-ресурсов образовательных организаций, академических публикаций и нормативных правовых документов. Перечисленные источники предоставили информацию о механизмах карьерного роста и профессионального развития руководителей школ в странах БРИКС.

Результаты исследования. Основные выводы исследования включают данные о значительных различиях в подготовке, отборе и роли руководителей школ стран БРИКС. Проблемы включают непоследовательные профессиональные стандарты, неструктурированные программы обучения и ограниченное количество эмпирических исследований о влиянии лидерства. В частности, Бразилия борется с политизированными процессами назначения руководителей школ, Китай и Индия сталкиваются с жесткой рамкой организационной культуры и недостаточной автономией. Россия и Южная Африка борются с недостаточными программами развития лидерства и системным неравенством.

Заключение. Индивидуальные модели лидерства, интегрирующие глобальные лучшие практики с местными культурными и структурными контекстами, имеют важное значение для повышения качества школьного образования. Эффективные рекомендации по политике включают создание программ лидерства на основе фактических данных, расширение междисциплинарных исследований и продвижение децентрализованных, совместных структур принятия решений. Данные инициативы направлены на преобразование школьного руководства из административного управления в посредников образовательных инноваций.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

школьное руководство, модели карьеры лидеров, страны БРИКС, профессиональное развитие, обучение лидерству, рекомендации по политике, стратегическое планирование

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A comparative study of school leaders' career models in the BRICS countries

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. This study examines the career development models of school leaders in the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). The importance of the research lies in addressing the transformation of education systems to meet 21st-century challenges, focusing on strategic leadership's role in enhancing teaching quality, student outcomes, and organizational effectiveness.

Materials and research methods. The research employs a comparative study framework, combining literature reviews, case studies, and analyses of empirical data from official educational institutions, academic publications, and regulatory documents. These sources provided insights into the mechanisms of professional development and support for school leaders across the BRICS countries.

Research results. Key findings reveal significant disparities in the preparation, selection, and roles of school leaders. Challenges include inconsistent professional standards, inadequate training programs, and a lack of empirical research on leadership's impact. Notably, Brazil struggles with politicized appointment processes, while China and India face hierarchical constraints and limited autonomy. Russia and South Africa grapple with insufficient leadership development programs and systemic inequalities.

Conclusion. The study concludes that tailored leadership models integrating global best practices with local cultural and structural contexts are essential for advancing educational quality. Effective policy recommendations include creating evidence-based leadership programs, enhancing cross-disciplinary research, and promoting decentralized, participatory decision-making frameworks. These initiatives aim to transform school leadership from administrative management to facilitators of innovation and educational excellence.

KEYWORDS

school leadership, leaders' career models, BRICS countries, professional development, leadership training, policy recommendations, strategic planning

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, transformation has emerged as a high priority in key policy documents [1] and been recognized as a major pillar on which the very future of education is based [2].

The study of career development models for school leaders in BRICS countries is particularly significant in the context of international initiatives aimed at advancing sustainable education. Organizations such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the International Association of Universities (IAU) emphasize the need to transform educational systems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning opportunities.

UNESCO highlights the strategic role of school leaders in improving education quality and addressing challenges related to digitalization, inclusion, and equitable access to knowledge. The Council of Europe underscores the importance of democratic governance in educational institutions, requiring school leaders to be prepared for inclusive and innovation-driven decision-making. Similarly, IAU initiatives foster international collaboration in the training of teaching staff and educational leaders, facilitating the exchange of experience and the adaptation of successful practices to local contexts.

Amid global changes and social challenges, BRICS countries face the critical task of creating flexible and sustainable career development models for school leaders. These models must consider local specificities while integrating international best practices, which is crucial for improving education quality, reducing educational inequalities, and fostering human capital development.

In view of the rapidly changing world and its challenges, school leadership is increasingly viewed as key to transformation of school education. The role of school leader has expanded radically to embrace strategic planning, introducing new approaches to teaching and learning, raising achievement and dealing with diversity.

Leadership and leaders are crucial in shaping a coherent organization and engaging collectively to clarify and make explicit key pedagogical and equity assumptions, which has a dramatic direct and indirect influence on the effectiveness of the school. Most significantly, school leadership at all levels is the starting point for the transformation of low-performing (and) disadvantaged schools [2].

Globally, there is a growing concern that in the 21st century, the preparation and in-service development for educational leaders is inadequate [3]. This statement is further emphasized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development "Report on Improving School Leadership" which stated: "There is a growing concern that the role of school principal designed for the industrial age has not changed enough to deal with the complex challenges schools are facing in the 21st century" [4, p. 16].

There is an emerging consensus that successful leaders in the 21st century will exercise influence on student achievement through two important pathways: (a) the support and development of effective teachers and (b) the implementation of effective organizational processes. Competencies to achieve these objectives can be developed through proper training programs and professional development of school heads (preservice and in-service). A competent principal should exhibit proficiency in matters related to management and administration of the school as well as exercise his or her instructional leadership in making the school effective [5].

A school leader of 21st century must be well equipped in crisis management, articulate in reschooling, digitally associated with network society, entrepreneurship models, and virtual schools. A major thrust of school leadership is to transform school into a productive learning organization. To meet the dynamics of complexities of 21st century school culture, a school leader must be people-oriented and believe in child uniqueness. A school leader must be capable of learning to build and lead teams to organize effective school [6].

21st century school leadership aims at:

- transforming school education;
- embracing strategic planning;

- developing new approaches to teaching and learning;
- raising achievements;
- dealing with diversity [4].

School leader's functions: administration, instruction, operation, community, inclusion and school improvement and effectiveness.

School leaders' roles: leader, facilitator, motivator, organizer, governor, business director, coordinator, superintendent, teacher, guide, philosopher, and friend [5].

In order for quality-promoting endeavors such as change, improvement, and reform to produce a transformed education, several assumptions are indispensable: (a) recognize the larger school and organizational context as crucial, alongside school architecture and processes, (b) define what quality education means across a variety of country contexts and with regard to specific structural arrangements and pedagogical cultures, (c) distinguish the degree and type of autonomy for schools and teachers, and estimate the effectiveness of their mixed interactions, (d) understand and cope from a change perspective within a variety of school cultures, (e) recognize the structural limitations faced by school leadership, as well as the margins to produce local, gradual improvement that can pave the way to radical transformation, and (f) start any significant change at the school level, in the interaction of leaders and teachers.

Despite the growing recognition of school leadership as a critical factor in the transformation of education systems, significant gaps remain in understanding how career development models for school leaders are designed and implemented across diverse contexts. Existing research highlights the importance of school leaders in improving educational outcomes, promoting equity, and addressing 21st-century challenges such as digitalization, inclusion, and diversity. However, much of the current literature focuses on developed nations, leaving a limited understanding of how leadership models function in emerging economies, such as the BRICS countries.

First, there is insufficient comparative analysis of school leadership career models across BRICS nations, which differ significantly in terms of cultural, structural, and systemic contexts. While individual country studies provide valuable insights, they often lack a broader perspective that could inform cross-national learning and policy development.

Second, the mechanisms of professional preparation and ongoing development for school leaders in these countries remain underexplored. The challenges of inadequate training programs, inconsistent professional standards, and limited autonomy reported in existing studies highlight the need for further investigation into the factors that contribute to effective leadership.

Third, the impact of local cultural and systemic factors on the adoption of global best practices in school leadership remains unclear. The interplay between international frameworks (e.g., UNESCO and OECD recommendations) and local contexts requires deeper exploration to identify actionable strategies for integrating these practices into BRICS-specific environments.

Finally, while the role of school leaders in fostering organizational change and improving school effectiveness is well-documented, there is a lack of empirical research on how these roles evolve in response to national educational policies and socio-economic challenges specific to BRICS countries.

These gaps underscore the importance of analyzing and comparing the career development models of school leaders in Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Understanding the unique challenges and opportunities in each context will not only contribute to academic knowledge but also support the development of tailored policy recommendations that address both local and global priorities in educational leadership.

Research objective

The aim of this study was to analyze and compare different models of school leaders' career development in the BRICS countries in order to identify highlights and challenges and develop policy recommendations.

To achieve the stated aim, this study adopts a comparative framework that enables the analysis of school leaders' career development models across the BRICS countries. The research process involves the following key methods:

1. Literature Review: A thorough examination of academic publications, policy documents, and international reports provides a foundation for understanding existing models of school leadership and their contextual frameworks in each country.
2. Case Studies: Selected examples of school leadership practices from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa offer detailed insights into the practical implementation of career development models and their outcomes.
3. Data Analysis: Empirical data from official educational institutions, research studies, and regulatory frameworks are systematically analyzed to identify patterns, challenges, and best practices.
4. Comparative Analysis: The study compares the career development mechanisms, professional preparation, and support structures for school leaders across the BRICS countries to highlight shared challenges and unique characteristics.

This multi-method approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the topic, enabling the formulation of evidence-based policy recommendations tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the BRICS countries.

Research framework

External factors:

- 1) economic development of the BRICS countries (GDP per capita);
- 2) PISA results of the BRICS countries.

Internal factors:

- 1) career models of school leaders in the BRICS countries;
- 2) mechanisms of school leaders support in career development in the BRICS countries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials and research methods employed in this study include a literature review, case study, comparative study.

Empirical data:

- official websites of the ministries of education, universities and research centers, authorized professional development centers of the BRICS countries;
- academic literature on career models and professional development of school leaders in the BRICS countries;
- regulatory documents dedicated to career development of school leaders in the BRICS countries;
- content of leadership and professional development programs, published results describing the impact of professional development programs for school leaders in the BRICS countries.

RESEARCH RESULTS

In the Springer edition "A Decade of Research on School Principals" [5], India, Brazil and South Africa were ranked as the Countries with Challenges to Develop Their School System. China was ranked School Systems with a Clear National Administrative and Control Structure. Russia was not included in the study.

Case 1: Brazil

1. Overview of education leadership policy in the country

In Brazil, principals are appointed in different ways, some by 'indication' (political), others by 'elections' (in the school) and some others by a more equitable, rigorous selection process. Principals in Brazilian schools seldom stay longer than 3 years.

In Brazil the school leadership role is insufficiently developed as a high-level professional function. Relative to other countries where most school leaders have postgraduate qualifications, Brazil's school leaders rarely do so. Selection processes for school leaders are at present unsystematic and often simply political. School leaders have limited decision-making power and rarely act as instructional leaders. Brazil lacks a set of clear standards and expectations for the school leadership role [7].

After the Federal Constitution and the Law on the Guidelines and Bases of National Education determined the principle of democratic management of public education, the focus on the performance of school management teams, instead of focusing on the principal, has been strengthened in public basic education schools [8].

At National Plan for the Education – Law 13.005/2014, the principle of democratic management figure explicitly to two articles: Art. 2, section VI and Art. 9, requiring measures to each federated state regarding the regulation of specific laws for the treatment of the subject: The states, the Federal District and the municipalities must approve specific laws for their teaching systems, disciplining the democratic management of public teaching in their respective fields of performance, within two years from the publication of this Law [9].

2. Career models of school leaders in the country

In the federal system, the federated entities act at the legislative level, which means they establish the standards and general objectives that should be observed. The teaching units operate at the executive level, which means they are responsible for the implementation of public policies and the achievement of educational results. Within this scenario, the democratization of education implies the development of a management model in which decision making should represent the interests of the entire school community.

Consequently, in addition to technical competence to achieve the school's goals, the school principal must have political and pedagogical skills, that is, the ability to engage people and generate team spirit as well as negotiate and resolve conflicts [5].

The role of principal is based on two principles: acting as a representative of the State and the school team and acting as an advance representative in the institution. In accordance with these principles, four characteristics of the professionalism of school principals are identified: competence, specificity of the function and of their knowledge, autonomy and belonging to a collective body [10].

The role of school principal in Brazil was constituted as part of the consolidation of the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of Brazilian education and is not always exercised by professionals with technical training, which have been evaluated by the public authorities to certify competences for the exercise of school management or, which have been chosen by the school community.

Currently, different practices coexist about the filling of the position of principal: appointment or election of the principals of Brazilian public schools. Despite the progress made in consolidating the principles of democratic management after the 1988 Federal Constitution, it is not always possible to fill the post of the principal based on impersonal criteria such as technical training or selection by public authorities based on the objective of certifying competencies for the exercise of the position.

Despite advances in choice for election by the school community [11], the practice of appointment or indication of the school principal is still common. In this case, the principal is chosen in the same schema of positions of trust. Under this condition, the principals can be replaced at any time in accordance with the political moment and conveniences. Sometimes, the appointment may be carried out by the executive power through the Department of Education or other organs. The indications can also be made by local politicians, which reveals an undemocratic scenario [8].

3. Mechanisms of school leaders support in career development in the country

The Brazilian Federal Government, in cooperation with State and local education systems, implements public policies to improve school outcomes. As a response for the underperforming students learning outcomes and the lack of proper preparation of school principals, the federal government established in 2004 the School of Managers in Basic Education (SMBE) policy, which aimed to develop school principals' competences to improve students learning outcomes [12].

Within the framework of this policy, a program has been developed Diploma in School Management (DSM). This was the largest and most comprehensive in-service school principals' development programme implemented in Brazil. From 2007 to 2016, 36,334 school leaders in Brazil enrolled in the DSM Programme. The cost per participant is around 1,000 US\$, and the dropout rate is 47% [13].

An analysis of publicly available documents on the DSM program showed:

- the programme did not refer to any of the most quoted authors or the most quoted articles in the field;
- a displacement between the policy formulation and its implementation was observed;
- disputes over programme conception was evidenced, prevailing a more insulated and local view on school management.

Results show that the policy for school principals' development in Brazil took very limited advantage of the contribution of research on educational leadership worldwide, despite research evidences showing that leadership practices share much more similarities than differences considering contexts.

Recommendations: to build a program based on scientific research of leadership methods that contribute to improving student academic performance; to adapt the best global leadership practices (including those implemented in developed countries) to the Brazilian context [13]; to advance programs that equip leaders with the political awareness necessary to navigate complex policy contexts effectively [14].

4. Organisations promoting school leadership development in the country

National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, Inep) [15].

Case 2: India

1. Overview of education leadership policy in the country

India has a large school system that comprises 1.3 million schools, many situated in remote rural areas. A country with one of the largest youth populations (19% of the world children and 356 million in 10-24 years olds acc. to Ramesh [6], and a unique history of paramount reverence to education.

The government Policy Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) was launched in 2009 with the target of achieving universal access to secondary education by 2017 and scaling universal retention by 2020 [16]. Further it proposed to focus on improving the quality of secondary education by strengthening the school leadership.

Recently increased school autonomy (requirements for strategic planning, formulating a mission and vision) has made it essential to reconsider the role of school leaders.

2. Career models of school leaders in the country

School leadership models in India are a mix of contemporary world leadership practices which are neither evolved nor developed from its age-old Indian ethos, values and conventions. Three Leadership models can be identified: authoritative, participative and laissez-faire. Authoritative “top-down” models of governance and rigid models of leadership are predominant in Indian schools [6].

Schools are organized hierarchically with rules, procedures and structures facilitating authoritative kinds of leadership and inhibiting others. School leaders play the role of school administrators or functional managers. Teacher is a leader while in the classroom but is put outside the ambit of school administration as long as she continues to be a teacher [17].

In thy top-down model, school leaders are appointed either through a formal recruitment process or by promotion. Sometimes, an efficient teacher who is promoted to the position of a school manager might not be an equally effective administrator. However, some state governments appoint school principals based on principal eligibility test which assesses the applicant’s administrative knowledge and pedagogical understanding [5].

However, there are some emerging national and state policies that envision a more democratized form of educational governance based on participatory approach [5; 6]. In this approach, teachers become more involved in decision-making and are viewed as a second-rank leader.

School leader’s profile: head teacher, headmaster (mistress), or principal teacher with a wide range of responsibilities ranging from the management of day-to-day routine affairs to the effective utilization of scarce resources in order to achieve the ultimate goal of providing quality education.

Despite less-than-optimal conditions, the principal must still deliver quality and sustain the overall effectiveness of the school’s education while continuing to meet the growing demand of continuous societal changes.

3. Mechanisms of school leaders support in career development in the country

India Education & Research Initiative programme (UKIERI) joint initiative of India and UK launched in 2006 with the aim of strengthening the research, leadership, and education linkages between the countries. Special focus is on providing trainings on education leadership for Indian educators [18].

Online Programme on School Leadership and Management at NUEPA. The School Leadership Development Programme is based on the National Curriculum Framework for School Leadership Development conceptualized by the National Centre for School Leadership. The curriculum has seven key areas which have been converted into seven courses that cover all the the major roles and responsibilities of school heads. The programme begins by giving a Perspective on School Leadership followed by Developing Self, Transforming Teaching Learning Process, Building and Leading Teams, Leading Innovations, Leading Partnerships and Leading School Administration. The last course helps the school heads in consolidating the learnings and prepare a school development plan [19].

City Fellowship Programme by India School Leadership Institute (ISLI). The programme is designed to develop and improve school leader’s skills in order to provide great education in their schools. The ISLI City Fellowship is offered in 448 schools across 4 cities, impacting more than 2.5 lakh students.

The programme structure includes workshops to enhance school leader’s skills and in-school support to identify specific areas of school improvement, implement solutions and derive results. The workshops include sessions that help the school in lesson planning, improving school systems, better classroom management, instilling the art of leadership and student engagement. The highlight of these workshops is that they are instruction-based and not theoretical to ensure that the benefit is translated from words to action. These workshops are planned as per the school leaders’ convenience. In-School support includes school Leader coaching, classroom observations by experts to analyze areas of improvement and working on solutions, school walkthroughs and visits to peer schools to understand best practices in the industry, school improvement plans and action-research projects conducted by teachers [20].

Teach for India. International organisation that supports educational opportunities across 60

countries. Founded in India in 2008 with the aim of providing under-privileged students with quality education. Provides to applicant's two-year fellowships for teaching in low-income or government schools. The community fellows are engaged in transformation of schools and development of education policy and reforms [21]. Provides access to repositories [22] that offer training on education leadership, coaching, mentoring opportunities, and other learning resources.

4. Organisations promoting school leadership development in the country

National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) was set up by the Ministry of education (previously the UNESCO's regional center for Educational Planners and Administration started in 1960) with the aim of planning, management and capacity building in educational policy, through research, training, consultancy and dissemination [23].

National Centre for School Leadership (NCSL). The Center was established in 2012 at NUEPA and is committed to transformation of schools in the country. The Centre focuses on "capturing the existing gap in the Leadership development and evolving a framework on school leadership to be institutionalized by different states". NCSL-NUEPA is working towards addressing the leadership requirement and contextual school issues in 36 states and Union Territories, 679 districts and 6500 blocks across the country [24].

India School Leadership Institute (ISLI). Established in 2013, India School leadership Institute (ISLI) is among the first organisations in India dedicated to developing skills of School Leaders [25].

Aim: to create a pipeline of leaders equipped to lead high performing schools for children of underserved communities and establish the benchmark for school leadership training in India. By improving standards within their schools, School Leaders (school principal, headmaster, school head, etc.) can improve parent satisfaction, teacher retention, student performance, and enrollment.

Highlights: there is an emergent national consensus to revamp school leadership and to advance best practices in school administration and governance; school boards play an important role for school governance – at least 50 % of board members are from the community.

Challenges:

- lack of accumulated body of knowledge and practice to foster the competencies of the current generation of Indian educational leaders;
- lack of evidence-based research on school leadership;
- empirical studies on school principals and their impact on student outcomes in India are limited which hinders the development of evidence-based policy of education leadership;
- top-down and hierarchical approach in school leadership. This approach hinders the autonomy of the Teaching fraternity and creativity of students;
- lack of professional development programmes in school leadership. Few universities and management institutes in India currently offer master's or higher-level course work in educational administration. Though the Indira Gandhi National Open University, the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), and a handful of state and private universities have been offering programs in educational administration, they are too few to meet the immense need. Indian scholars still appear to be divided between a managerial type of training (MBA model course work offered by business schools) and educational administration/leadership training (M.Ed.) offered by colleges of education;
- school leaders selection procedures do not take into account the required 21st century competencies. The procedure followed to select principals in secondary schools in India does not currently put the necessary emphasis on elements of experience, training, and development in the field of educational administration and/or management;
- there is urgent need of paradigm shift and elevation of teacher from academic instructor to School Leader.

Case 3: China

1. Overview of education leadership policy in the country

The New Curriculum Reform (launched in 2001). The aim of this curriculum reform was to move students to the centre of teaching and learning and to transform teaching and learning to foster such capacities as creativity, innovation, collaboration, self-expression, engagement, enjoyment of learning, inquiry skills, problem-solving abilities and the ability to apply knowledge in practice [5].

In the view of new policy principals must shift their norms of practice to facilitate student learning and are required to design and organise their school curriculum and oversee teacher development.

More school autonomy: the reform advocates the establishment of a hierarchical curriculum management system comprising state, province and school. Different from the previous practice requiring only that schools deliver the curriculum designed by the central authority, schools today are also allowed to develop a school-based curriculum that caters to the specific needs of their students.

The overall reform has not been delivered as designed and that most of the intended reforms have not become rooted in school practice. This situation has led to policies focusing on school principals.

Three-Year Action Plan to Promote Curriculum Leadership of Secondary and Primary School (and Kindergarten) Principals (issued in 2010 by Shanghai Municipal Education Commission) – Principals are expected to assume the role of learning leaders and to adopt more innovative approaches to student learning and teacher development.

The Professional Standards of Principals at the Compulsory Education Stage (issued in 2013) is the first national policy addressing principals' professional competence and stipulates the six following professional responsibilities:

1. planning school development;
2. creating a learning culture;
3. leading the curriculum and instruction;
4. facilitating teacher growth;
5. optimising internal management;
6. accommodating the external environment [26].

Principal Responsibility System. By introducing this system the government delegated part of power to schools in managing human resources, financial resources, teaching content and processes, and in developing school charter as well as intramural rules and regulations [27].

According to this system, the local education authority is responsible for supervising the leadership of local schools; the principal is the ultimate leader for the school as a whole.

2. Career models of school leaders in the country

School organization in China generally has a hierarchical, pyramid structure in which a top down and clear chain of command is set: School leadership team at the top, the middle managers in the middle, then the lower managers, and the ordinary teacher, office staff and ancillary workers at the bottom. The school leadership team consists of the principal and vice-principals, the Party secretary (there is an associate Party secretary in some large-sized schools), and the chairperson of School Trade Union. The principal is the chief leader in a school leadership team and is, in the light of the school size, assisted by one or more vice-principals. The middle managers include the directors of Office for Moral Education (OME), Office for Curriculum & Instruction (OCI), Office for Scientific Research & Teacher Development (OSR&TD) and Ancillary Services (AS). The heads of Grade Units (GUs) and heads of Teaching-Study Groups (TSGs) together with the heads of Lesson Preparation Groups (LPGs) act as the lower managers. Conventionally, the principal with vice-principals take responsibilities to supervise the directors of OME, OCI, OSR&TD and AS, and the directors are respectively responsible to manage the daily operation of moral education, curriculum and instruction, general service and support affairs and coordinate the intra school research projects and teacher development [28; 29].

For example, the Teaching-Study Group of Mathematics is responsible for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning of Mathematics by supervising the performance of the Lesson Preparation Group of Mathematics at every Grade Unit (e.g. from year 1 to year 6 in a primary school, or year 7 to year 9 in a junior high school) and organizing school wide teaching study activities for all Mathematics teachers [30].

The Lesson Preparation Group is responsible for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning of a subject by supervising performance of individual teachers at the same grade and organizing teaching study activities for teachers of the same subject at the same grade [31].

We consider the models of career growth of senior personnel of educational organizations in China using the examples of the administrative units of Shanghai and Hong Kong, as characterized by the most effective practices.

Shanghai. Possible career paths of the teaching staff of educational organizations in Shanghai (figure 1): academic, managerial (school, university), managerial (educational supervision authorities) [32].

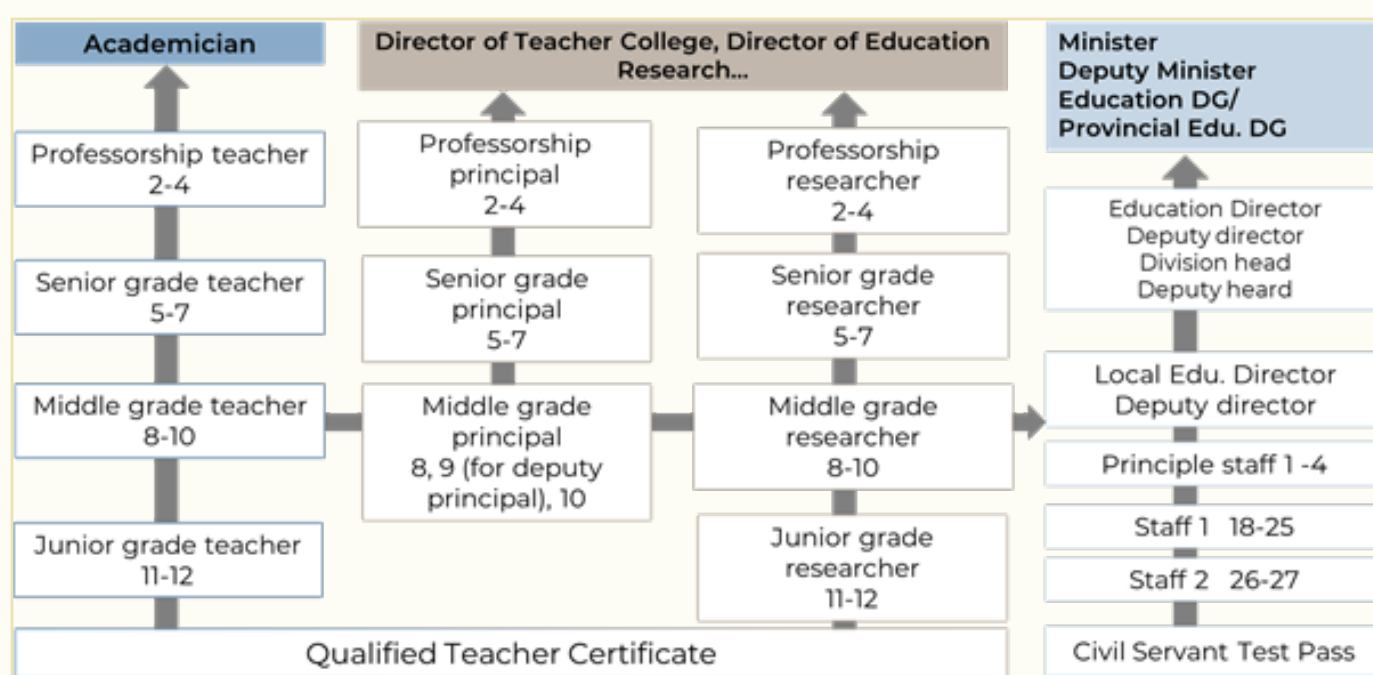


Figure 1 Possible career paths of the teaching staff of educational organizations in Shanghai

Career ladder of teaching staff of educational organizations in Shanghai.

Teachers' professional career ladder:

- 1) Junior grade teachers (1–4 years; 11–12 level);
- 2) Middle grade teachers (3–10 years; 8–10 level);
- 3) Senior grade teachers (8–30 years; 5–7 level);
- 4) Mastery Teachers (Special award);
- 5) Professorship grade teachers (4–1 level).

A special ladder for school principals:

- 1) Second-grade school principal;
- 2) First-grade school principal;
- 3) Mastery Principal (Special award);
- 4) Professorship grade school principal.

Requirements for each stage of career development (figure 2).

Rank and Title	Appraisal Unit	Level	Appraisal Unit	Requirements
Professorship teacher (principal)	Municipal agency	Level 2 Level 3 Level 4	Municipal agency Municipal agency Municipal agency	1) Bachelor degree* & TC; 2) 2) Senior-grade teacher title for 5 years & above; 3) Outstanding teaching or management performance awards at national or provincial levels and high student achievements; 4) High commitments and support rural or low-performance schools; 5) Well-known publications (papers and books) , research achievements; 6) Training as program leaders and mentors for other teachers' development;
Senior-grade teacher (principal)	District agency	Level 5 Level 6 Level 7	District agency School based	1) Bachelor degree & TC; 2) 2) Middle-grade teacher title for 5 years & above; 3) Meet the work and teaching load every year without teaching accident 4) Excellent teaching performance and municipal & district awards; 5) Meet the in-service training requirement and TC re- registration 6) Chair or Join education research project; 7) Guide teachers as a mentor
Middle-grade teacher (principal)	District agency	Level 8 Level 9 Level 10	School based School based	1) Bachelor degree & TC; 2) 2) Junior-grade teacher title for 4-5 years; 3) Meet the work and teaching load every year without teaching accident; 4) Professional commitment and good behavior; 5) Good teaching performance with district and school awards; 6) Meet the in-service training requirement and TC re- registration 7) Join education research project.
Junior-grade teacher	Municipal agency	Level 11 Level 12	School based	1) Bachelor degree and Teacher Certificate (TC); 3) Meet the work and teaching load every year without teaching accident; 4) Professional commitment and good behavior; 5) Good teaching performance with school awards; 6) Meet in-service training requirement & school-based development activities 7) Join education research project.

Figure 2 Requirements for each stage of career development

Multi-dimension requirements for promotion:

- 1) Education qualifications (bachelor, master, and doctor);
- 2) Teachers certificates and re-registration (every 5 years);
- 3) Commitment, morality and responsibility (by colleagues);
- 4) Annual workload (15 hours teaching per week) & quality;
- 5) Years of experience (at least 5 years for each grade);
- 6) In-service training requirements (at least 540 hours);
- 7) Semester and annual performance appraisal and awards;
- 8) Research achievements, paper published and awards;

9) Social and professional service (in training and helping others, professional activities, and support schools and communities)

Each stage of a career includes several grades, in order to move to the next level it is necessary to successfully pass the assessment and meet the formal requirements. The salary scale is tied to the career steps. The career ladder is uniform not only for pedagogical and managerial personnel of educational organizations of various levels, but also for all employees of the public sector (teachers, doctors, engineers, etc.). For example, the position of a teacher with the rank of professor at a school corresponds to the social status and salary equivalent of a professor at a university.

Career development is carried out on the basis of regular assessment of the competencies of teaching staff, which includes:

- regular appraisal system for individual teachers: half-year review, annual appraisal, promotion evaluation;
- regular collective evaluation: Teaching Research Group (Grade Group) annual evaluation; school evaluation.

Hong Kong.

The model of career growth of teaching staff (figure 3).

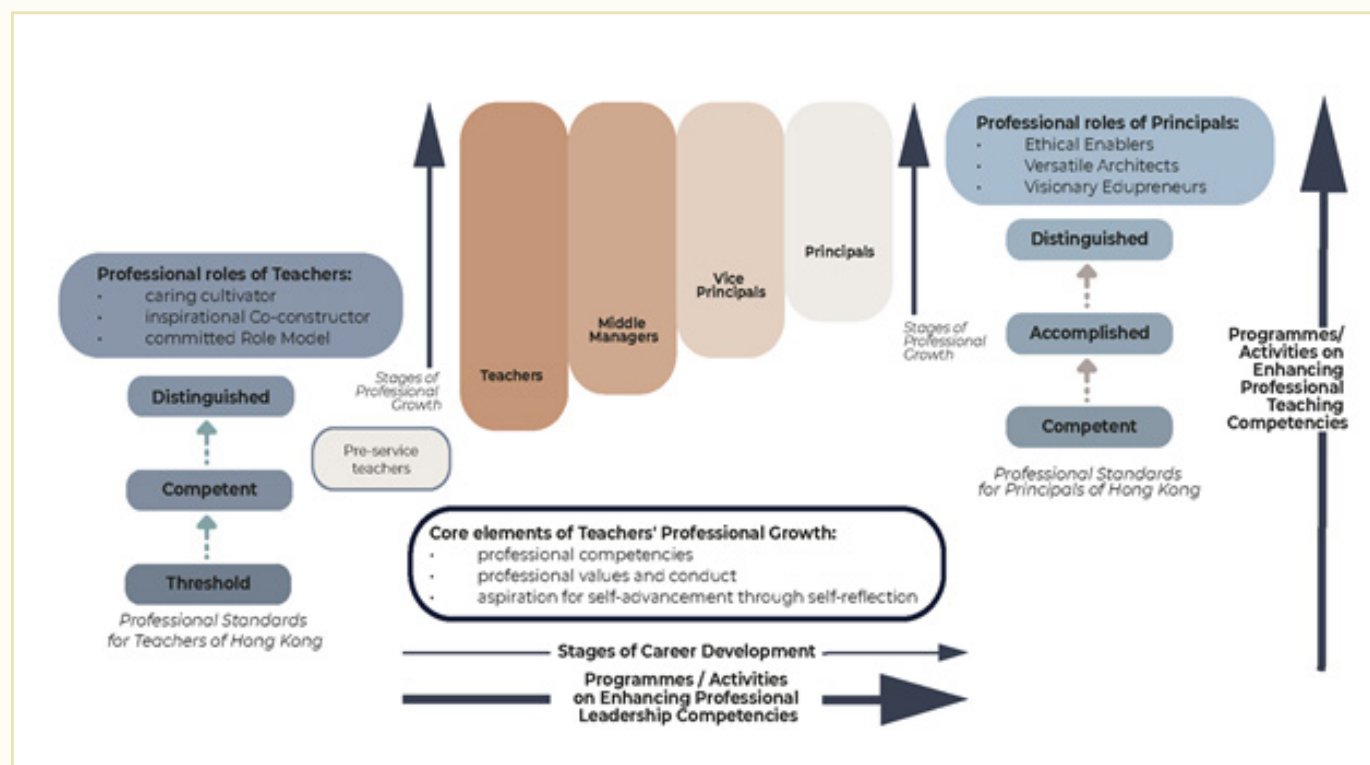


Figure 3 The model of career growth of teaching staff

The presented model reflects the development strategy of the heads of educational institutions in Hong Kong, the effectiveness of which is confirmed by the high results of international research. It is important to note that the career ladder is centralized for all public sector employees (teachers, doctors, engineers, etc.).

The professional development of teachers and heads of educational organizations in Hong Kong is based on professional standards, which ensures transparency in the process of assessing professional competencies and career growth for both teaching staff and inspectors (mentors, curators).

3. Mechanisms of school leaders support in career development in the country

Mechanisms of social recognition of the merits of teaching staff in China:

- excellent teacher, principal and school election and wards: at school, district, municipal and national;
- teaching achievement selection and awards: at school, district, municipal and national level;
- excellent Teaching Contests for Young Teachers (below age of 40): at school, district; municipal and national level;
- other professional and social awards and titles, such as Special-grade (Mastery) Teachers and Model Labours.

China currently features three types of principal training:

- induction training for school principal candidates,
- continuing training for principals who have a professional certificate for school principalship,

- research training for those principals who not only have professional certification but have also demonstrated exemplary performance in their positions [33].

The induction training offers basic knowledge and skills that are considered necessary for effective school leadership. The renewal training offers trainees a broad range of curricula in education and educational administration. The advanced training usually offers trainees selected topics for in-depth learning and research [34; 35].

The duties of the current directors include participation in three types of professional development activities:

- a) structured training – participation in professional development programs, conferences and symposiums, public events;
- b) practical training – participation in projects of the Education Foundation, procedures for assessing the quality of the educational process, in projects to improve the work of schools; publications in scientific journals magazines to spread their knowledge and experience;
- c) service to education and society – work as an expert in various advisory committees, voluntary agencies, public and religious organizations.

4. Organisations promoting school leadership development in the country

Advanced training for acting principals who have been selected nationwide for training as demonstrative leaders is conducted by:

- National Training Center for Secondary School Principals in East China Normal University; National Training Center for Primary School Principals in Beijing Normal University. These training centers incorporate best practices and field input into training policies, train-the-trainer practices, and curriculum design;
- Induction and renewal training;
- Provincial level for high school principals, which includes some advanced training for selected candidates;
- city level for junior high school principals;
- district level for local primary school principals [36].

Highlights: increased school autonomy despite highly centralised administrative organisation.

Challenges:

- lack of empirical research (the authors of core journal publications are faculty members of normal universities and full-time research fellows of educational research institutions and mostly rely on the traditional Chinese approach of 'argumentation' rather than on first-hand empirical data [36];
- lack of specialized leadership programmes. Despite significant strides, today's principal training programs in China are unable to meet the demands of the nation's reforming educational system. Programs content is often fragmented, lacks a theoretical and empirical foundation, and pays little attention to practice;
- lack of training providers. The number of training centers at the district level shrank from 2,088 to 1,800 (a 14.8% reduction), and from 1996 to 2005 the number of provincial or city normal colleges for teacher training decreased from 240 to 80 (a 66.7% reduction) [36];
- opportunities for training unequally distributed among principals. This is due to great regional differences in resources—large gaps exist between urban and rural areas and between developed and underdeveloped areas;
- inability of training staff to keep up with the changing needs and rising expectations of the principals.

Case 4: South Africa

Highlights: principals' leadership is mostly related to management and control. This is often due to a lack of knowledge.

Challenges: South Africa has two systems, and 70–80 % of the schools are underperforming schools, which mostly are reported as being not safe places for the students.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

School principals in all countries are subject to more and more public scrutiny and held to be more closely accountable by governments for the academic attainment and equity of learning opportunities for all their students. All have been affected in some way not only by a higher focus on students' measurable results and accountability but also demographic shifts and increased turbulence in these societies.

All countries witness a movement by governments towards decentralisation, with increased expectations for stronger leadership, self-evaluation and participatory decision-making.

Characteristics of the country systems: India, China, Brazil and Russia have large school systems involving several levels and students with diverse needs from communities in widely differing geographical and socioeconomic environments. India, for example, has 1.3 million schools, many situated in remote rural areas.

India, Brazil and South Africa face particular challenges in modernising and upgrading their school systems. These relate to teacher and principal qualification structures and standards, resource provision, distribution and equity. For example, state schools in these countries generally do not have the high standard of the best private schools. There is at present limited research, conducted by native researchers, on school leadership in these countries.

Insufficient research on principals – a lack of sufficient resources to support research on principals.

Principals sometimes get stuck with managing 'of the moment' mundane administrative issues. Their service to students, teachers and parents becomes more important than working to increase learning opportunities among the students.

Many principals also teach, and in some countries, their work is combined with other tasks. In South Africa, as in other countries, this can result in control by management rather than leadership support.

Countries report on no or insufficient principal training (Brazil, Russia, South Africa, India).

Our study examined career models of school leaders in the BRICS countries, revealing significant differences in approaches to managing educational institutions in these nations. The findings obtained are crucial for understanding global trends in the development and administration of school education.

First, our data confirm the opinion of De Albuquerque Moreira A. M. and Borba Rocha M. Z. [8] who argue that Brazil faces considerable challenges in developing its school system. This is evidenced by the fact that in Brazil, the appointment process for school principals is often politically driven, and principals themselves rarely remain in their positions for more than three years. However, it is worth noting that despite these difficulties, Brazilian schools are gradually transitioning towards a more democratic style of management, emphasizing the work of the entire administrative team rather than solely relying on the principal.

Second, we agree with Lu J. and Campbell P. [28] who assert that China possesses a clearly structured national system of administrative control over school education. Our research also demonstrated that Chinese school leaders enjoy a high degree of autonomy in decision-making and actively participate in the management of the learning process.

Regarding India, our findings align with those of Tang Y. F. et al. [36], indicating that this country faces serious issues in the realm of school education. Nevertheless, we discovered that in recent years, India has taken steps to improve the quality of training for school leaders and enhance their roles in the educational process.

Overall, this study expands existing knowledge about career models of school leaders in the BRICS countries and underscores the importance of considering national specificities when formulating strategies to improve school education. The outcomes of our research can serve as a foundation for further comparative studies in this field and facilitate international cooperation in education.

CONCLUSION

Since one of the challenges was lack of evidence-based research, the policy recommendations need to include recommendations on research agenda:

- 1) Providing financial support for research on school leadership – commissioning research grants from government and municipal agencies should be made available.
 - a) To conduct more studies that result in findings that can be generalised while also ensuring that the results should have practical implications in a specific and unique local context.
 - b) More qualitative and quantitative research will help addressing questions regarding the measurable effects of principal leadership on their schools and the student outcomes.
 - c) Studies should include cross-/multidisciplinary perspectives. The inclusion of academic disciplines, such as political science, history, sociology, psychology and the learning sciences, would have the potential of opening new and fruitful areas of research on and understandings of school principals and their work.
- 2) Creating educational leadership programs that will benefit the quality of school leadership in the BRICS countries, and through this, the quality of teachers and teaching and, through them, the learning and achievement of all students.
- 3) The role of a school leader should be transformed from school manager to 'facilitator' of change. This will promote school transformation based on the autonomy of the teaching staff and creativity of students.
- 4) Each BRICS country should develop her own unique school leadership model based on best practices from developed countries and incorporating cultural, historical, psychological and geographical characteristics inherent to each region.

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