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Challenges of Pedagogical Supervision in the Contemporary Educational Context

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. WdFO conceived the study and the author wrote the manuscript in collaboration with author ECN. Authors HNdP, PCPP and AIVS reviewed the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: This study aimed to analyze the main challenges faced by pedagogical supervision in the current educational context, highlighting its role across different levels and modalities of education.
Study Design: Descriptive narrative literature review.
Methodology: A search was conducted covering the last five years in the SciELO and CAPES Portal databases, as well as in the gray literature through Google Scholar. The descriptors used were "pedagogical supervision," "teacher training," and "higher education," combined with the boolean operator AND. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, eight studies were selected, all from scientific journals.

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Results: The findings reveal that pedagogical supervision still faces significant challenges, such as the lack of clear guidelines, excessive workload assigned to supervisors, and a shortage of ongoing training. In many contexts, practices are still rooted in directive and bureaucratic models focused on control and inspection, which limits their formative potential. Furthermore, structural factors such as lack of resources and institutional fragility hinder the effectiveness of supervisory actions. However, more recent experiences indicate a gradual shift toward more dialogical and collaborative approaches that emphasize active listening, teamwork, and continuous pedagogical support for teachers. In this transition, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) play a strategic role, strengthening communication among educational stakeholders, enabling the monitoring of pedagogical practices, organizing data, and facilitating online training.
Conclusion: It is concluded that pedagogical supervision must be redefined as a formative and supportive process, requiring public policies that invest in supervisor training, technological resources, and structures for professional development.

Keywords: Pedagogical supervision; teacher training; contemporary education; pedagogy of practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is central to the teaching and learning process, and the pedagogical decisions made by teachers is critical to students' experiences of engagement (Parviainen et al., 2024; Bhuttah et al., 2024). Pedagogical supervision constitutes a fundamental pillar in school organization, and its conception has undergone transformations over the past decades (Agricola et al., 2022; Coimbra et al., 2020; Marie, 2021). Historically, as noted by Nascimento et al., (2024), the supervisory function has evolved from a traditional, controlling model—focused on compliance with norms and regulations—to more contemporary, collaborative approaches aimed at the continuous training of educational managers. According to the authors, this shift reflects a current perspective that prioritizes teamwork, critical analysis of educational data, and evidence-based decision-making to achieve more effective student learning outcomes.

However, despite this conceptual evolution, the practice of pedagogical supervision still faces challenges in specific contexts, particularly when it involves specialized modalities such as inclusive special education. As highlighted by Negreiro & Gonçalves, (2023), the school supervisor plays a crucial role in monitoring teachers who work with students with special needs. Nevertheless, in many cases, this function is limited to a superficial monitoring of the activities carried out by professionals in Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE), without significantly contributing to the improvement of teaching practices. The authors emphasize that "the supervisor understands the importance of their role in inclusive special education; however, they often end up merely overseeing the work of the specialized professional alongside teachers" (Negreiro & Gonçalves, 2023, p. 127).

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of the pedagogical supervisor faced new and complex challenges. Carvalho et al., (2021) investigated the work of pedagogical supervisors during the implementation of hybrid education in the state of Tocantins, highlighting that supervision had to quickly adapt, assuming a crucial technical support function to ensure the continuity of emergency remote teaching. The authors stress that, in this unexpected scenario, the supervisor played a strategic role "in guiding and strengthening teachers' work, aiming to support and motivate the team while coordinating with families to establish a new educational approach" (Carvalho, 2021, p. 2). In this context, the need to reconfigure supervisory practices and strategies became evident to ensure a closer, more humanized, and dialogical approach.

This study aims to analyze the main challenges faced by pedagogical supervision in the current educational context through a review of recent literature. It seeks to understand how supervision has been conceived and practiced across different educational levels and modalities, identifying its limitations, potentialities, and pathways for its redefinition as a formative and transformative practice in the educational environment.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Pedagogical supervision in higher education faces several challenges that significantly compromise its transformative potential in

educational practices. According to Greia & Uagire, (2023), in the context of YX University in Mozambique, pedagogical supervisors often work without adequate material and training resources, directly affecting the effectiveness of their role. The authors point out that the selection of professionals responsible for supervision is primarily based on trust and administrative leadership positions, without proper technical or academic training. This hinders the adoption of more consistent and innovative pedagogical practices by faculty members. Furthermore, they highlight that many professors do not fully perform their basic duties, such as properly planning lessons or regularly participating in continuous training activities, which reinforces a limited perception of supervision as a mere administrative and bureaucratic function rather than a formative and reflective practice.

In a critical analysis of teachers' perceptions of pedagogical supervision, Nicaquela & Assane, (2021) highlight a challenging scenario for formative practices in the Monapo District, Mozambique. The authors found that, from teachers' perspectives, supervision is predominantly seen as an administrative activity with a strong oversight and punitive character. Instead of perceiving it as an opportunity for continuous professional growth, teachers often regard supervisory visits to their classrooms as isolated and unproductive events, significantly limiting the potential of supervision to support effective improvements in teaching quality. These findings underline an urgent need to redefine pedagogical supervision, shifting its focus from a controlling approach to a collaborative and professional development perspective capable of fostering trust between supervisors and teachers.

Lopes & Henriques, (2024), in a study conducted within the professional training of the Tax and Customs Authority in Portugal, highlight that pedagogical supervision often lacks structure and is dominated by hierarchical and directive models. Although they acknowledge the emergence of some collaborative practices, the authors emphasize that supervision is still largely perceived as an activity aimed at ensuring compliance with administrative norms, with little emphasis on reflective or dialogical processes that could drive real changes in pedagogical practices. This situation is further complicated by the lack of clarity regarding the role and methodology employed by supervisors, who often lack specific training or well-defined strategies to promote the professional development of trainees. The study suggests that a more structured and collaborative approach could significantly enhance the effectiveness of pedagogical supervision in fostering sustainable formative changes.

The experience of pedagogical supervision in the context of emergency remote teaching was also discussed by Reis et al., (2021) in their analysis of supervised internships in Pedagogy programs during the pandemic. The authors emphasize that, despite the limitations imposed by social distancing, it was possible to implement effective pedagogical practices thanks to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). They highlight that pedagogical supervision played a crucial role in adapting traditional methodologies to new technologies, significantly contributing to maintaining the quality of formative experiences through the use of "cloud computing tools and collaborative virtual environments" (Reis et al., 2021, p. 2).

Alongside the adaptations required by the pandemic context, Carvalho & Oliveira, (2022) critically analyzed the broader landscape of Brazilian higher education, linking it to the goals of the National Education Plan (PNE). According to the authors, the challenges faced by pedagogical supervision reflect broader structural issues related to public education policies and the country's economic and political constraints. In this regard, they highlighted that budget restrictions and austerity policies have negatively impacted the expansion and quality of higher education, including supervision and evaluation processes. This underscores the urgent need to review policies and strategies for more effective pedagogical supervision in higher education.

It is important to emphasize that these structural challenges not only limit the role of pedagogical supervision but also reduce its capacity to effectively support continuous formative practices in institutions. Nascimento et al., (2024) add to this discussion by advocating for the importance of autonomy and responsibility in the delegated supervision process—a model in which supervisors play a more active role in the continuous training of management teams. This more autonomous supervision approach enables more integrated and effective school management, directly contributing to better educational outcomes.

In this perspective, Costa et al., (2020), reinforce that the professional identity of the supervisor in higher education must be built upon consolidated

and continuous pedagogical training, which overcomes the dichotomy between technical and pedagogical knowledge. This construction is essential to break with the view of supervision as a merely administrative activity and to achieve a formative and humanized role.

In agreement with this analysis, Barros et al., (2022), point out that supervisors need specific pedagogical training, particularly in performance evaluation and innovative practices, highlighting the importance of a continuous training process and the recognition of teaching activities in health services. These elements are essential to promote effective and meaningful supervision.

In contrast to the bureaucratic models still present, Machado & Alarcão, (2020), observe that supervision in graduate education programs in portugal has been traditionally associated with assessment, with little emphasis on the reflective, collaborative, and interpersonal dimensions of practice. This corroborates the urgent need for a reconceptualization of pedagogical supervision toward a formative practice.

In the same vein, Tsybulsky & Muchnik-rozanov, (2023), demonstrate that the inclusion of future teachers in project-based learning courses fosters the development of a more autonomous, reflective, and collaborative teaching identity. Such strategies could be adapted to supervisory practices to make them more effective and formative.

The studies analyzed point to an urgent need for the reconceptualization and restructuring of pedagogical supervision, considering both the challenges posed by emerging crises and the specific demands of different educational modalities. This perspective should go beyond a merely administrative vision, assuming a formative and collaborative role that not only monitors but also transforms pedagogical practices in diverse educational contexts, ensuring quality and equity in student training.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a descriptive narrative literature review. Database searches were conducted in SciELO, the CAPES Journal Portal, and the gray literature via Google Scholar, using the descriptors "pedagogical supervision," "teacher education," and "higher education," combined with the Boolean operator AND. The search was limited to the past five years, and narrative, integrative, and systematic reviews were excluded. Initially, eight publications were identified; of these, three were excluded after abstract screening and five after full-text reading, due to a lack of relevance to the research topic.

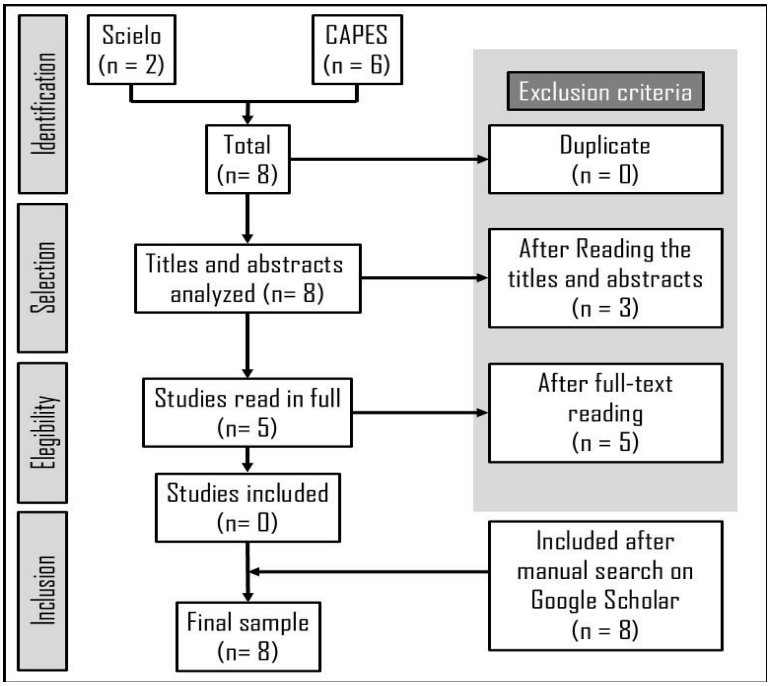

Fig. 1. Flowchart of study retrieval
Source: Authors' own

Additionally, eight studies were identified through a manual search of the gray literature using Google Scholar. The selection criteria included studies that specifically addressed the challenges faced by pedagogical supervision in the current educational context. All eight selected studies met the established inclusion and exclusion criteria and were published in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

As a result of the search strategy, the final sample consisted of eight studies. A detailed flowchart illustrating the selection and retrieval process is presented in Fig. 1.

4. RESULTS

From the analysis of the selected articles, significant aspects related to the challenges faced by pedagogical supervision in the current educational context were identified. These findings are summarized in Table 1, which presents a comparative synthesis of the main conclusions from the reviewed studies.

Table 1. Comparative synthesis of the main findings from the analyzed studies

Study	Context	Main Findings Identified	Comparison with the Literature
Greia e Uagire, (2023)	Higher Education in Mozambique	Supervision with little structure, insufficient resources, selection based on administrative positions, and lack of continuous training.	Confirms Lopes and Henriques' (2024) view on directive models and insufficient continuous training practices.
Nicaquela & Assane, (2021)	Basic Education in Mozambique	Supervision is perceived as an administrative and punitive practice, with little contribution to teachers' continuous training.	In line with Negreiro and Gonçalves (2023), who also highlight superficial supervision focused on oversight.
Lopes & Henriques, (2024)	Professional Training in Portugal	Hierarchical and directive supervision, with unstructured practices and limited formative impact on pedagogical change.	Corroborates the findings of Nascimento et al., (2024), highlighting the need for collaborative practices.
Nascimento et al., (2024)	SESI-SP Network, Brazil	Evolution of supervision from an oversight model to a collaborative approach, focused on the continuous training of educational managers.	Differs from the directive models identified in Mozambique (Greia & Uagire, 2023), showing significant progress.
Negreiro & Gonçalves, (2023)	Inclusive Special Education in Joinville-SC	Supervision limited to monitoring, without in-depth engagement in inclusive pedagogical practices.	Similar to the limited model identified by Nicaquela and Assane (2021), with little formative influence.
Carvalho et al., (2021)	Hybrid Education During the Pandemic (Tocantins, Brazil)	Supervision played a strategic role in emergency adaptations, highlighting the need for technological and relational skills.	Reinforces the findings of Reis, Vito, and Picelli (2021) on the importance of digital technologies in pedagogical supervision.
Reis et al., (2021)	Estágio supervisionado remoto (Paraná, Brasil)	Adaptação bem-sucedida às tecnologias digitais para a realização do estágio supervisionado durante a pandemia.	Complements Carvalho, Carvalho, and Barbosa (2021), highlighting the positive potential of ICTs in pedagogical supervision.
Carvalho & Oliveira, (2022)	PNE Goals (Brazil)	Structural and budgetary limitations negatively affect the effectiveness of pedagogical supervision practices in higher education.	Confirms the findings of Greia and Uagire (2023) regarding structural and economic difficulties.

Source: Research data

The results presented in Table 1 highlight that, despite conceptual and methodological advances, pedagogical supervision still faces considerable practical challenges that limit its effectiveness. There is a clear predominance of directive and administrative practices in specific contexts, as identified by Greia & Uagire, (2023) and Lopes & Henriques, (2024), hindering an effective formative role. On the other hand, positive experiences reported by Nascimento et al., (2024) in the SESI-SP network demonstrate that it is possible to transition towards more collaborative approaches focused on continuous professional development.

Another relevant aspect is the urgent need for the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), as pointed out by Carvalho et al., (2021) and Reis et al., (2021). The COVID-19 pandemic required an emergency adaptation of pedagogical supervisors, revealing that the proper use of digital technologies can significantly enhance the positive impact of supervision in the contemporary educational context.

Finally, the research by Carvalho & Oliveira, (2022) reinforces that the challenges of pedagogical supervision cannot be isolated from public policies and the structural conditions of educational institutions. The broader scenario of economic limitations and educational policies directly influences the ability of supervision to achieve its objectives, thus requiring strategic actions and more consistent public policies to strengthen this fundamental pedagogical practice.

5. CONCLUSION

This literature review highlighted the various challenges faced by pedagogical supervision in the current educational context, particularly in response to demands imposed by health crises, structural limitations, and weaknesses in educational policies. The analyzed studies reveal a heterogeneous reality in which supervisory practices, in many contexts, remain anchored in directive and regulatory models with low formative effectiveness. On the other hand, successful experiences, such as those developed in the SESI-SP network and during emergency remote learning, demonstrate that collaborative approaches, combined with the strategic use of technology, have the potential to redefine the role of the pedagogical supervisor.

Pedagogical supervision must be rethought from a formative, dialogical, and integrative perspective, recognizing the teacher as a key player in the educational process and the supervisor as a partner in the collective construction of knowledge and pedagogical practice. Encouraging continuous training, investing in public policies that value education, and strengthening structural conditions in institutions are essential aspects for advancing high-quality supervision.

This research contributes to the understanding of the complexities involved in pedagogical supervision, providing a critical and up-to-date overview of its limitations and possibilities. For future investigations, it is recommended to conduct empirical studies that explore collaborative supervision strategies across different levels and teaching modalities, as well as analyze the impact of educational policies on the effective exercise of this essential function for improving the quality of education.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models, etc. have been used during the writing or editing of manuscripts. This explanation will include the name, version, model, and source of the generative AI technology and as well as all input prompts provided to the generative AI technology

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1. During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT 3.5 to assist in the translation of the article. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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