Journal of the Academy
Asociación de Universidades del Perú, Lima, Perú.
ISSN 2707-0301
Núm. 14. Enero-Junio 2026
http://journalacademy.net/

REPORT OF A CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM WITH EDUCATIONAL COUNSELORS IN THE MUNICIPAL PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM OF SAPUCAIA DO SUL/RS

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Received	:	17/06/2026
Approved	:	27/06/2026
Published	:	24/06/2026

ABSTRACT: This article presents an analytical account of a continuing education experience carried out with pedagogical advisors from the municipal education network of Sapucaia do Sul, RS, Brazil. The experience was developed within the scope of a research-training project linked to a 30-hour extension course. In this context, the study sought to answer the following question: How does a continuing education program, organized as research training, contribute to clarifying intervention criteria, defining responsibilities, and improving records and communication flows within the network? To this end, its general objective was to promote collaborative construction, reflection, and proposals aimed at strengthening professional identity, resignifying pedagogical practices, and valuing the role of Educational Counselors within the Municipal Public Education Network of Sapucaia do Sul, RS. The study was developed through a systematic process involving up to 55 Educational Counselors, during which specific issues related to the challenges and opportunities of organizing pedagogical guidance work in the network were addressed. In addition, empirical materials collected through field notes, autobiographical narratives, and discussion group records were analyzed. To conduct the study, a hermeneutic-interpretive approach was adopted, with methodological procedures inspired by Discursive Textual Analysis, triangulated with sources and complemented by interpretive feedback to the participating group. The results were organized around five analytical axes: professional identity and demand regimes; limits of action and school governance; records, justifications, and continuity; intersectoriality and co-responsibility; and continuing education as institutional infrastructure. Based on these axes, operational guidelines are proposed to strengthen performance criteria, communication flows, recording practices, and training cycles with feedback within the municipal education network.

Keywords: Educational Counseling, Continuing Education, Research-formation, institutional records, municipal school system.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational guidance, in the Brazilian context, is a field of school practice historically marked by ambiguities regarding its function and by disputes over what is expected of this work. In certain institutional settings, it is understood as a practice of pedagogical mediation and coordination among students, teachers, families, school administrators, and school system services. In others, it shifts toward a logic of individualized attention, emphasizing counseling and person-centered referrals. This variation is not merely terminological, as it directly affects the way schools distribute responsibilities, define roles, and distinguish between problems that are pedagogical, institutional, and collective in nature and those considered strictly individual issues. By viewing the school as a social institution shaped by educational projects and historical forms of work organization, it becomes possible to understand that these shifts in emphasis reflect broader movements toward the reconfiguration of school operations, rather than merely local management decisions (Saviani, 2011).

When the school shifts the blame for tensions arising from the organization of work onto the student, it tends to oversimplify educational processes and undermine analysis of the institutional conditions that underlie recurring difficulties. In this context, the guidance counselor's role can serve as a point of absorption for scattered demands, activated to respond to urgent needs, without shared criteria, established routines, or records to ensure continuity. The result is often a reactive, fragmented approach, subject to frequent changes in direction, which compromises follow-up and prevention efforts and favors ad hoc, opaque decisions. From the perspective of the school organization, this pattern resembles dynamics in which the school is driven by short-term demands, with a prevalence of operational tasks and a weakening of pedagogical mediation—a scenario widely problematized in critiques of the technocratic and managerialist tendencies present at certain points in the educational debate (Saviani, 2011).

This situation is exacerbated in contexts where school management is driven by goals, indicators, and demands for rapid response, leading to increased operational tasks and greater pressure for immediate results. Schools come to operate under the pressure of productivity,

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while the complexity of daily life demands time for listening, coordinating actions, and agreeing on courses of action. For Educational Guidance, this creates a paradox: the demand for interventions and solutions increases, while the institutional conditions for building agreements, organizing workflows, and sustaining ongoing processes are reduced. When considering the school as a social practice, it is worth noting that such pressures not only reorganize priorities but also reshape pedagogical work, modes of documentation, and forms of accountability, which places Educational Guidance at the center of disputes over the purpose, mediation, and meaning of school work (Saviani, 2011).

Under these circumstances, the central issue is no longer merely what the educational counselor does but rather how the school organizes work so that educational counseling fulfills its public function. It is a matter of understanding the activity as a relational practice, dependent on coordination among actors, explicit decision-making criteria, and a minimal institutional infrastructure comprising flows, agreements, documents, and records that ensure continuity and coherence. This relational dimension can be further explored through the understanding that professional identities are constituted through interactions and processes of mutual recognition. By describing the self as a social construct, shaped by communicative experience and the ability to assume the role of the other, Mead shows that behaviors and criteria become stabilized when there are shared collective references—linked to the "generalized other"—that guide expectations and regulate practices (Mead, 1934). In terms of the counselor's work, this means that assessments and referrals become more consistent when the network establishes common references for what to observe, how to document, how to make decisions, and how to share responsibility.

In this context, continuing education can be understood as a mechanism for reorganizing work within the network rather than as an occasional content update. It creates the conditions for making assumptions explicit, bringing to light criteria that already operate implicitly, discussing responsibilities among sectors, and aligning communication and record-keeping procedures. By fostering shared reference points, training helps reduce improvisation, strengthen shared accountability, and improve decision-making quality—especially in situations that require coordination between schools and the social safety net, student

monitoring, and communication with families. From an interactionist perspective, this process can also be understood as a space for professional socialization, in which meanings are negotiated, expectations are adjusted, and shared parameters for action are established, leading to greater predictability and stability in everyday school life (Mead, 1934).

In light of this, this article describes and analyzes a continuing education program for educational counselors in a municipal public school system in Sapucaia do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul. The text uses field notes as the basis for systematizing the training experience and, based on the records produced, presents proposals to organize work within the network, with a focus on responsibilities, communication flows, and institutional record-keeping practices. By treating training as a situated context, the study seeks to highlight implications for the coordination of work, the transparency of referrals, and the stability of processes that, in the day-to-day school environment, tend to scatter amid urgent matters, competing demands, and the absence of consistent agreements. This aspect concretely reframes the debate over the organization of schoolwork and the social production of professional standards within the school. The question guiding this account is: How does a continuing education program, organized as a research-training initiative, contribute to clarifying intervention criteria, establishing responsibilities, and refining communication records and flows within the network?

From a training perspective, the program aimed to develop reflections and proposals that strengthened professional identity collaboratively, reviewed intervention criteria, and highlighted the public role of educational guidance within the municipal network. This objective was put into practice through activities that included analyzing everyday practices, studying regulations, creating narratives, and providing interpretive feedback, thereby linking professional development to the reorganization of work. Although the course focused on the group of educational counselors, teaching staff, administration, and local services, these groups frequently emerged as key stakeholders in the work, given that the challenges analyzed involve coordination and shared responsibility that extend beyond a single sector.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

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The training experience was designed as an extension course in the research-training format, combining in-person peer meetings with ongoing activities in a virtual environment. The program's structure sought to shift the focus from training centered on abstract recommendations to training grounded in everyday life, in which real-world work situations were addressed, described, discussed, and translated into criteria that could be communicated to the network. This approach addressed a recurring practical problem identified as early as the initial meeting: the tendency for educational guidance work to be driven by diverse demands—often framed as urgent needs—that risk fragmentation, overlapping responsibilities, and instability in guidance pathways.

The sequence of meetings was organized to ensure a progressive flow: it began with an introductory session and a roundtable discussion aimed at identifying recurring demands and clarifying the meaning of the work; it then moved on to the study of regulatory and ethical frameworks related to professional practice, particularly Lei nº 5.564 (1968), regulated by Decreto nº 72.846 (1973), and the Code of Ethics for Educational Counselors in Brazil (República Federativa do Brasil, 1979); and culminated in the production of autobiographical narratives and the provision of interpretive feedback. This sequence of events allowed everyday episodes—often treated as isolated—to be transformed into material for collective analysis, with attention paid to the context, participants, existing records, the criteria applied, and the justifications invoked in decisions and referrals.

Participation took place in stages. Following the initial expanded meeting with 55 educational counselors, participation in subsequent sessions was voluntary and fluctuated throughout the process, stabilizing at four participants in the final stage. This variation was treated as an element of the context under analysis itself, as it reflects objective difficulties in establishing dedicated training time within the daily school routine and highlights limitations to the immediate generalization of the proposals. The course participants consisted of educational counselors. Teachers and other professionals did not participate as course attendees. However, they were constantly mentioned as part of the mediations that structured the work, especially regarding issues related to workflows, records, attendance, support networks, and referrals.

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The field journal served as the backbone of the process, not merely as a source of documentation. At the end of each session, the facilitation team compiled descriptions of the group's development, summaries of the discussions, and analytical notes on tensions and recurring themes. These summaries were shared with the group as feedback, allowing participants to revisit decisions, ensure continuity between sessions, and reduce reliance on individual memories. This factor proved particularly relevant given fluctuations in attendance. To preserve anonymity, the excerpts used in the findings section were identified by codes (E1-E4), without reference to names or schools. No audio or video recordings were made; instead, priority was given to written records agreed upon with the group to maintain the formative nature of the space while ensuring the traceability of the processes and interpretations that emerged.

METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a qualitative approach and presents an analytical account of a continuing education experience conducted as research-based training within the framework of an extension course for educational counselors in the municipal public school system of Sapucaia do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul. The writing was planned as an interpretive systematization of the process, to produce an overview that clarifies the relationships between institutional demands, work organization, and the practical criteria employed by the participants. This approach aligns with the understanding that, in qualitative research, the production of knowledge depends on the reconstruction of meaning from field data, with coherence among the objective, the corpus, and the analytical procedures (Triviños, 1987). It also follows the recommendation to explicitly outline the research design, sources of information, and handling of the material, to ensure transparency and rigor in the presentation of the analytical process (Gil, 2017).

The training program took place throughout 2025 and combined synchronous sessions and asynchronous activities, totaling 30 certified hours. Five in-person sessions were held in the morning, each lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes, along with one synchronous online session lasting approximately 1 hour, dedicated to interpretive feedback and agreeing on next steps.

Between sessions, participants had access to a virtual learning environment (Classroom) containing relevant legislation and study materials. The asynchronous hours were primarily devoted to guided reading of the materials, the development of autobiographical narratives, and the review of feedback on the field journal, which integrated the certified course load in continuity with the in-person work.

The study was presented at an initial expanded meeting attended by 55 educational counselors, during which the objectives, procedures, data collection methods, and ethical considerations were explained. Participation in subsequent meetings was voluntary and required signing the Informed Consent Form. Throughout the study, participation fluctuated: 10 participants at the first meeting, 8 at the second, 6 at the third, and a steady 4 participants in the final meetings. This reduction was considered a contextual factor, as it was related to the institutional conditions under which the role is carried out, to the difficulties in allocating dedicated training time within the daily school routine, and to the scope of the proposals developed.

Table 1

Implementation Schedule

Session	Activity	Objective	Time commitment	Date
1.º	Welcome, presentation of the proposal, and discussion on professional identity	Bring participants together, present the proposal, and initiate reflection on professional identity	1 hr 30 min	August 13, 2025 (morning)
2.º	Reading and discussion of Law No. 5,564/1968, Decree No. 72,846/1973, and the Code of Ethics for Educational Counselors	Analyze the legal and ethical foundations of the role and bridge the gap between theory and practice	1 hr 30 min	August 27, 2025 (morning)
3.º	Autobiographical writing workshop (career path, challenges, meanings of the practice)	Encourage self-reflection through professional storytelling	1 hr 30 min	September 10, 2025 (morning)

4.º	Preliminary feedback on the narratives and group discussion	Share experiences and analyze practices as a group	1 hr 30 min	September 24, 2025 (morning)
5.º	Closing with a social gathering and symbolic exchanges	Strengthen bonds and foster a sense of professional belonging	1 hr 30 min	October 1, 2025 (morning)
Supplementary (asynchronous) activities	Classroom (legislation, newspapers, books, and supporting materials)	Maintain continuity between sessions and expand one's repertoire	Until a total of 30 hours is reached	Along the route

*Note***.** Prepared by the authors.

The corpus consisted of: (i) a field journal compiled by the facilitation team; (ii) autobiographical narratives written during the third session; (iii) records of the feedback and agreements reached during the group discussions. The field journal was written at the end of each session, with additions made shortly thereafter. It was structured into three components: a description of the session's proceedings, a summary of the debate including the agreed-upon next steps, and analytical notes documenting justifications, tensions, recurring themes, and turning points. This record was used as a tool to track the process and as a basis for interpretive reconstruction, in line with the journal's use as a primary source in qualitative educational research, to capture emerging meanings and shifts throughout the process (Triviños, 1987).

The analysis followed an interpretive and iterative process, with clearly defined stages to ensure traceability. First, a comprehensive reading of the records was conducted to identify episodes and units of meaning. Next, thematic coding was performed, grouping the excerpts by semantic proximity and by their function in the discussion. In the subsequent stage, the groupings were refined into analytical categories through comparisons across meetings and the identification of recurrences, contradictions, and shifts in position. Finally, an analytical reconstruction of the process was consolidated, articulating problem situations, forms of justification, agreements, and effects on work coordination. The explicit description of these stages follows the recommendation to make clear how the material was handled and how the

presented inferences were reached, which strengthens the methodological consistency of the account (Gil, 2017).

The units of observation and interpretation were: (i) problem situations raised by the participants and their ramifications; (ii) modes of justification and negotiation of responsibilities; (iii) agreements regarding communication flows and modes of expression; (iv) indications of a reconfiguration of the meanings of work throughout the feedback sessions.

RESULTS

The findings were organized into five analytical themes, developed through an interpretive process that combined successive reading, comparison across data points, and triangulation of sources. The analysis was based on the understanding that, in qualitative research, interpretive consistency depends on coherence between the objective, the corpus, and the procedures, as well as on the explicit articulation of the path linking the data and inferences (Triviños, 1987). In this sense, the themes were not defined a priori. However, they emerged from a process of contrast and convergence between the field diary, the autobiographical narratives, the records of the conversation rounds and the feedback sessions, as well as the regulatory documents discussed throughout the study, in line with triangulation proposed as a strategy to enhance credibility and reduce reliance on a single source (Denzin, 1978).

The interpretive feedback served as a stage for the dialogic validation of provisional syntheses, approximating the idea of verification through return to the field, employed to strengthen the credibility of interpretations in naturalistic research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The analysis of the material followed a process of unitarization, categorization, and the development of interpretive syntheses, inspired by the procedures of Discursive Textual Analysis, which supports the transition from empirical text to analytical constructions through progressive reorganizations of the corpus (Moraes and Galiazzi, 2007).

Table 2

Analytical Summary of the Key Themes: Challenges, Observed Effects, and Proposals Derived from the Training Program (Sapucaia do Sul - 2025)

Focus	Challenge	Effects	Proposals
Theme 1: Professional Identity and Demand Structures	• An unstable role that straddles mediation, emergency response, and operational tasks	• Reactive response • Weak prevention and support	• Agreed-upon institutional priorities • Intervention criteria • Minimum follow-up agenda
Theme 2: Scope of Action and School Governance	• Vague responsibilities • Therapeutic, care-related, or disciplinary expectations	• Conflicts and insecurity • Personalized decisions	• Letter of Authority • Decision-Making and Consultation Bodies • Referral and Feedback Channels
Theme 3: Records, Justifications, and Continuity	• Inconsistent record-keeping • Vague justifications	• Poor traceability • Discontinuity in cases	• Hybrid registration model • Minimum form and protocol • Registered return
Theme 4: Intersectorality and Shared Responsibility	• Undefined workflows • Dispersed responsibilities	• Overload and rework • One-way branches	• Mapping of priority workflows • Deadlines and responsibilities • Thematic committees
Theme 5: Continuing Education as Institutional Infrastructure	• Training is treated as an event • Low continuity	• Unstable Agreements • Recurring Problems	• Cycles with summaries and feedback • Continuity through records • Simple monitoring indicators

*Note***.** Prepared by the authors.

The first theme, "professional identity and demand patterns," emerged from recurring patterns across the narratives and conversation rounds. Educational guidance is described as a response to diverse demands, often framed as urgent needs, which forces practitioners to oscillate between pedagogical mediation, administrative tasks, and external referrals. "Daily

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interruptions" and "unscheduled consultations" were cited as factors that undermine the continuity of support and reinforce the logic of immediate response (E1).

The second theme, scope of practice and school governance, emerged from the contrast between the guidelines discussed in the regulatory study and the recurring practices described. The data revealed expectations that the counselor would assume therapeutic, support, or disciplinary roles, which exacerbate conflicts, increase uncertainty regarding institutional support, and encourage ad hoc decisions. "There is a discrepancy between the legislation governing our profession and what happens in the day-to-day life of the school," a statement that summarized the conflicts regarding the boundaries and governance of the work (E1).

The third pillar—traceability: records, justifications, and continuity—was underpinned by the convergence of three factors: the recurrence of situations with no minimum record-keeping, the difficulty of ensuring continuity in support services, and the vulnerability of the work to divergent interpretations. Documentation emerged as an ambivalent requirement, associated both with the need for continuity and with bureaucratic practices that yield no analytical insight. "A lot of red tape to complete and publish verifications," without analytical insight, undermines traceability and the purpose of documentation (E2).

The fourth theme, intersectorality and shared accountability, was structured around recurring episodes in which the counseling service becomes a focal point for demands due to the lack of stable communication channels with faculty, administration, and local services. The triangulation between the field notes and the discussion rounds revealed that rework stems, to a large extent, from the absence of stage-specific responsibilities, deadlines, and clear feedback channels. In instances of coordination with the network, criticism of centralization emerged: the guidance counselor should not remain the "sole person responsible," as this increases rework and weakens shared accountability (E3).

The fifth pillar—continuing education as institutional infrastructure—summarized the program's essence as a mechanism for reorganizing work. The fluctuation in participation, set against a backdrop of emergencies and interruptions, was interpreted as evidence of the objective difficulties in establishing dedicated time for training within the daily school

routine. Even so, feedback sessions and autobiographical writing demonstrated the ability to produce a common language and shared criteria when training is sustained over time and the insights gained are fed back to the group.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The analysis of the "professional identity and demand regimes" axis was based on the interactionist conception that identity is constituted through relationships and the process of adopting the perspective of the other, with reference to the "generalized other" as a determinant of behavior and belonging (Mead, 1934). Thus, when the school recognizes the guidance role as a "problem-solver" for multiple issues, it tends to reinforce a reactive and diffuse mode of action. The discussion indicated that the reconfiguration of this identity depends on agreed-upon criteria and institutional priorities that safeguard time and tasks oriented toward prevention and support, preventing the work from being reduced to the management of emergencies.

Regarding the intersection of the scope of action and school governance, the analysis focused on the debate over the rationales that underpin the organization of school work and the reshaping of roles under pressures for efficiency and rapid responses. Criticism of neotechnicism and competency-based pedagogy helped shed light on this shift by highlighting how the centrality of performance and operationalization tend to fragment pedagogical work and diffuse responsibilities (Saviani, 2011). In this context, governance was presented as a concrete need to clarify responsibilities, limits, decision-making bodies, and channels for referral and feedback, to stabilize institutional criteria and safeguard the pedagogical purpose of the role.

The theme of traceability—records, justifications, and continuity—was interpreted in light of the requirement for justifications that can be communicated within the institutional sphere. The theory of communicative action emphasizes that the coordination of action is strengthened when decisions can be justified, questioned, and reconstructed in publicly shareable terms (Habermas, 1987). In the program materials, the absence of records was

presented as a factor that weakened shared responsibility and increased reliance on individual memories.

In the area of intersectorality and shared responsibility, the observed pattern was analyzed as a problem of institutional coordination rather than an individual shortcoming. When there are no explicit agreements, each actor operates on the basis of implicit and unstable criteria, which undermines continuity and fosters centralization and communication noise (Habermas, 1987).

About continuing education as institutional infrastructure, the autobiographical narrative did not function as an individual memoir but rather as a resource for elaborating and analyzing professional experience, consistent with approaches that conceive of autobiography and education as processes of meaning-making and the reconstruction of practice (Josso, 2004). At the same time, the advocacy for synthetic studies that socialize knowledge and provide resources for pedagogical work underscored the importance of syntheses returned to the collective as a basis for planning (Saviani, 2011).

At the end of the process, the five themes enabled the development of a synthesis that articulates practical problems and possibilities for reorganizing the work of Educational Guidance within the network. The material indicated that regimes of demand and recognition, unstable boundaries of practice, weaknesses in record-keeping, and ambiguities in intersectoral flows produce cumulative effects of overload, rework, and discontinuity in support services. Conversely, when training is structured around continuity, feedback, and mutual agreements, it facilitates the clarification of criteria, the development of communicable justifications, and the establishment of shared references, thereby reducing the need for individualized decisions and fostering shared accountability.

CONCLUSIONS

The study, conducted as a research-training project, showed that some of the difficulties attributed to the individual performance of educational counselors are related to institutional conditions that shape—and, in some cases, restrict—their work. Vaguely defined functional

boundaries, unstable workflows, and insufficiently coordinated record-keeping systems compromise the continuity of support and the quality of collaborative work among the school's various departments. In this regard, the training process provided insight into the challenges and effects observed in educational counseling, enabling the formulation of practical recommendations for the municipal network.

The analyses indicate that continuing education, when planned as research-based training, can serve as a mechanism for reorganizing the work of educational counselors, provided it is incorporated as institutional policy rather than as an ad hoc measure. For this to produce sustained effects, the network's governing body must ensure dedicated time, continuity between sessions, and the systematic dissemination of summaries, so that collective discussions are transformed into shared practical guidelines for decision-making, record-keeping, and referrals.

The research also showed that the relationship between educational systems shapes the professional identity of the educational counselor, the demands of the school community, and the way in which the professional himself or herself perceives his or her role within the institution. When the guidance service is called upon as an immediate response to diverse problems, its role tends to be reduced to a reactive practice, which limits the time available for prevention, planning, and the systematic support of students, families, and school teams.

Collective reflection on situations in everyday school life, combined with interpretive feedback and the study of regulatory and ethical frameworks, facilitated the formulation of communicable priorities and intervention criteria. It also made it possible to identify critical points in the governance of the work, particularly in relation to school administration, teaching, families, and local services, and to highlight that the quality of the intervention depends on institutional agreements, feedback channels, and records that support shared accountability.

One limitation worth noting is the fluctuation in the participation of educational counselors throughout the process. This variation limits the scope of the inferences but, at the same time, constitutes a relevant piece of data regarding the context under study, as it reveals the

difficulty of setting aside dedicated time for training within the school routine. For this reason, it is considered appropriate to strengthen support mechanisms between sessions, documentation strategies that ensure institutional preservation, and the minimum conditions for participation that will enable sustained, ongoing training processes.

It is recommended to maintain regular training cycles with interpretive feedback, expand the availability of training opportunities through partnerships between public management bodies, and enhance the monitoring of workflows, records, and responsibilities. In the medium and long term, periodic evaluation of these processes may yield benefits such as greater traceability of action plans, reduced rework, stabilized decision-making, and the strengthening of Educational Guidance as an institutional practice of mediation, follow-up, and shared accountability within the municipal network.

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