

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GERMAN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL  
POLICY ABROAD: GERMAN SCHOOLS IN LATIN AMERICA**

***A IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DA POLÍTICA CULTURAL E EDUCACIONAL ALEMÃ PARA O  
EXTERIOR: AS ESCOLAS ALEMÃS NA AMÉRICA LATINA<sup>1</sup>***

***LA IMPLEMENTACIÓN DE LA POLÍTICA CULTURAL Y EDUCATIVA ALEMANA  
EN EL EXTRANJERO: ESCUELAS ALEMANAS EN AMÉRICA LATINA***

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**ABSTRACT:** The article presents the specificities of the Latin American context with regard to the implementation of German cultural and educational policy abroad through an analysis of the German Schools Abroad located in this region. Using a qualitative approach, it explores the data contained in the Directory of Schools Abroad produced by the Central Agency for Schools Abroad and the representation of the school management provided on the official websites of these schools, analyzing them according to concepts about public policy implementation. The article proposes that the German school system abroad, based on models of cooperation between German governmental bodies and private entities in host countries, is characterized by the central role of local actors in the implementation of this policy. It concludes that the hallmarks of ambiguity of the German Cultural and Educational Policy Abroad enable the system to adapt to the different local realities of the schools.

**KEYWORDS:** German schools abroad. Implementation of public policies. Cultural and educational policy abroad.

**RESUMO:** O artigo tem por objetivo apresentar as especificidades do contexto latino-americano quanto à implementação da Política Cultural e Educacional da Alemanha para o Exterior, através de uma análise das Escolas Alemãs no Exterior, localizadas nessa região. Através de uma abordagem qualitativa, ele explora os dados constantes no Diretório de Escolas no Exterior produzido pela Agência Central para Escolas no Exterior e a representação da direção escolar disponibilizadas nos sítios eletrônicos oficiais dessas escolas, analisando-os à luz de conceitos sobre implementação de políticas públicas. O artigo propõe que o sistema escolar alemão no exterior, baseado em modelos de cooperação entre instâncias governamentais alemãs e entidades privadas nos países anfitriões, se caracteriza

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*pelo papel central de atores locais na implementação dessa política. Ele conclui que as marcas de ambiguidade da Política Cultural e Educacional da Alemanha para o Exterior possibilitam que o sistema se adapte às diferentes realidades locais das escolas.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Escolas alemãs no exterior. Implementação de políticas públicas. Política cultural e educacional para o exterior.*

**RESUMEN:** *El artículo presenta las especificidades del contexto latinoamericano en cuanto a la implementación de la Política Cultural y Educativa de Alemania en el Exterior a través de un análisis de las Escuelas Alemanas en el Exterior. A través de un enfoque cualitativo, explora informaciones elaboradas por la Agencia Central de Colegios en el Extranjero y la representación de la gestión escolar en las páginas web oficiales de las escuelas, analizándolas a la luz de los conceptos sobre la aplicación de las políticas públicas. El artículo propone que el sistema escolar alemán en el extranjero, con cooperación entre organismos gubernamentales alemanes y entidades privadas en países de acogida, se caracteriza por el papel central de los actores locales en la implementación de esta política. Llega a la conclusión de que las características de ambigüedad de la política permiten que el sistema se adapte a las diferentes realidades locales de las escuelas.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Colegios alemanes en el extranjero. Implementación de políticas públicas. Política cultural y educativa en el extranjero.*

## Introduction

This article deals with the implementation of the German Cultural and Educational Policy Abroad through one of its pillars: German Schools Abroad, with a focus on those located in Latin America. It aims to draw a panorama of the specificities of the Latin American context in comparison to other regions of the world regarding the implementation of this German public policy, based on data regarding the composition of the teaching and student body of the schools, as well as the school diplomas offered and the composition of the school board. The analysis considers, above all, the notion of policy ambiguity<sup>5</sup> (MATLAND, 1995), which gives the German school system abroad a certain flexibility in the different local contexts. The German schools abroad aim to enable students to have contact with cultural diversity, especially with regard to German culture and the culture of the host countries<sup>6</sup>, as well as to train future professionals who are interculturally qualified for society, business, science and culture and who have a strong connection to Germany (ZFA, 2018). This is a strategic investment for the consolidation of Germany as a destination for business, economy, and higher education in view

<sup>5</sup> O conceito de ambiguidade da política será abordado mais à frente.

<sup>6</sup> By "host countries" in this context we mean the various countries in which the German Schools Abroad are based.

of the growing demand for qualified foreign university students in the country (BOLLINGER, 2019). These schools operate in a cooperative format between German government bodies and private providers in the host countries, which gives local actors a central role in the implementation of this policy directly linked to German cultural diplomacy.

### **Theoretical frameworks and methodology**

In order to analyze the implementation of German cultural and educational policy abroad, the article uses the Directory of German Schools Abroad (BUNDESVERWALTUNGSAMT, 2021), a publicly accessible document available on the website of the Central Agency for Schools Abroad (*Zentralstelle für Auslandsschulwesen, ZfA*). It contains a wealth of information about the schools, including, for the purposes of this analysis, the year in which the schools were founded, the school diplomas offered, and available information about pupils - the proportion of pupils with German citizenship who have German as their first language - and teachers - the proportion of expatriate and local contract teachers, as well as teachers who teach in German and in the respective national languages<sup>7</sup>. This data is complemented by information on the national or binational nature of the leadership of each of the 138 German Schools Abroad on their official websites, i.e., to identify those cases in which the school leadership consists exclusively of the German principal, possibly with his deputy principal, sent by the responsible German authorities, and those cases in which it is also possible to identify a national principal or deputy principal from the respective host country.

As a theoretical reference for the analyses, we considered the studies on the implementation of public policies, which, since the 1970s, constitute a field of analysis that focuses on the State's actions and the materialization of these policies, valuing the look on the processes and actions that give concreteness to the governmental activity in a procedural perspective, in a cycle composed of four major stages: agenda, formulation, implementation, and evaluation (LOTTA, 2019). Although such stages in isolation do not necessarily correspond to reality, they constitute a useful analytical tool to understand these processes. In this field, a key reference for the analysis of Germany's Cultural and Educational Policy Abroad concerns the synthetic model of implementation analysis developed by Richard Matland (1995), with emphasis on the concepts of policy conflict and ambiguity. When there is clarity about the

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<sup>7</sup> Besides this information, the document also contains information such as the telephone numbers and addresses (physical and electronic) of the schools and the respective German consulates or embassies responsible, the dates of school holidays, and the languages taught at each school - in most cases German, the respective national language, English, and possibly one more foreign language.

objectives and the means to achieve them, conflict and ambiguity are low and what the author calls administrative implementation occurs, in which policies tend to be executed in a standardized manner, by actors with a low degree of discretion, achieving fairly predictable results (LOTTA *et al.*, 2021). When there is consensus about the need for a particular policy, but there are disagreements about how it should be implemented, the conflict is low and ambiguity is high. There is, then, the experimental implementation, in which "[...] contextual conditions dominate the process" (MATLAND, 1995, p. 165-166, authors' translation). In contexts of high conflict and low ambiguity, policy implementation occurs when "[...] actors have clearly defined objectives, but dissent occurs because these clearly defined objectives are incompatible" (MATLAND, 1995, p. 163, authors' translation). Finally, in contexts marked by high conflict and high ambiguity symbolic implementation occurs, in which "[...] the course of policy is determined by the coalition of actors at the local level who control the available resources" (MATLAND, 1995, p. 168, authors' translation).

Another important concept for this analysis involves school autonomy. Barroso (1996) deals with this aspect on two levels. The first refers to the notion of decreed autonomy, according to which the public authorities merely grant autonomy to schools, while the second level, of constructed autonomy, concerns the "[...] interplay of dependencies and interdependencies that the members of an organization establish among themselves and with their surroundings and that allow them to structure their organized action according to their own collective objectives" (BARROSO, 1996, p. 10). However, the author considers that, strictly speaking, autonomy cannot be decreed, but rather "[...] the formal norms and rules that regulate the sharing of powers and the distribution of competencies among the different levels of administration, including the educational establishment" (BARROSO, 2004, p. 71).

From this point of view, while the decreed autonomy is seen within the scope of the legitimizing discourses of decentralization policies, the constructed autonomy reflects the process of recognition of the strategies and concrete actions of schools. From this perspective, the school functions as a relational space, which articulates "several logics and interests - political, managerial, professional, and pedagogical" (BARROSO, 1996, p. 185). In order to understand the field in which the German Schools Abroad are situated and the implementation of the German Cultural and Educational Policy Abroad, we discuss below the context of the international schools in which they are situated.

## The Context of International Schools

There is no commonly accepted definition of what qualifies a school as international. According to Murphy (2000, apud SCHIPPLING; ABRANTES, 2018, p. 13), "So far, no one has come up with a definition of 'international school' that does not exclude some schools that consider themselves international and does not include others that may not be." Hornberg (2010) distinguishes between four types of international schools: the first are schools abroad founded by one country in another, with the curriculum and diplomas of the founding country; the second are private schools offering the curriculum and diploma of the host country, as well as one or more foreign curricula or diplomas; the third consist of private schools with international or foreign curricula or diplomas, such as the *International Baccalaureate* (IB)<sup>8</sup>; the fourth and last, deals with state schools that offer their students international ramifications beyond national curricula and diplomas.

Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2016) propose other categories. For the authors, until very recently, international schools could basically be classified into two major types, as proposed by Hayden and Thompson (2008). The first type is called "traditional" and refers to schools that offer education to the children of globally mobile parents. They are usually private, non-profit schools, funded by tuition fees and run by parent cooperatives. Most of the students are expatriates, usually from Western countries and not from the host country. The second, smaller type, called "ideological," is made up of schools committed to global peace education and internationalism, which seek to ensure an international perspective for students through their curricula. According to the authors, this scenario is being reconfigured by the rapid growth of a third type of international school, categorized as "non-traditional. These are private, for-profit schools that have emerged as a new niche for business. These schools tend to take their students mostly from the local population, with children from upwardly mobile families or from wealthy parents.

In these cases, the choice of international schools is linked to the attempt by middle-class families to ensure their offspring an advantage in their educational trajectory, with a view to better opportunities in higher education and better opportunities for professional insertion in the global market (ALMEIDA, 2002; NOGUEIRA, 2002). Amorim (2012) highlights the internationalization of studies, at different levels of schooling, as a strategy of distinction (BOURDIEU, 1984) and maintenance of borders by social groups with greater cultural and

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<sup>8</sup> *International Baccalaureate*,<sup>8</sup> is a non-profit foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland, that offers internationally recognized programs and curricula for different stages of basic education.

economic capital than others. This is due to the devaluation of titles resulting from the democratization of access to education and the corresponding increase in the number of graduates in the labor market, which drives the search for increasingly higher levels of education and rarer types of schooling.

### **German Schools Abroad and Cultural and Educational Policy Abroad**

Germany is a federal republic, and its educational system is characterized by decentralization and the sharing of responsibilities among the different levels of government. The organization of basic education<sup>9</sup> is primarily a matter for the federal states (*Länder*), which coordinate their actions with both the federal government and the local authorities. The federal principle is an inalienable clause in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany and reproduces a long tradition of culturally and economically decentralized structures, so that the federal states, in addition to their political functions, also represent strong regional identities (BISCHOFF *et al.*, 2018).

In the educational realm, in a simplified way, it is up to the Union to oversee and distribute tax resources to state governments, so that they operate their educational systems (GONSALVES, 2013). Schools do not have a centralized organization, and the responsibility for the design, administration, and oversight of the school system lies with each of the 16 federal states. Thus, each state can regulate its school curriculum and define how subject offerings take place, as well as the transition between different school stages and school types (SCHÜTTLER-HANSPER, 2018). Still, the curriculum structure for the stage of compulsory education<sup>10</sup> is similar in all of them (MORDUCHOWIEZ; ARANGO, 2010), thanks to the existence of an instance of cooperation and agreement between the states, called the Permanent Conference of Ministers of Education (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, KMK), which coordinates educational policies (OECD, 2014). The KMK guarantees the equivalence or equivalence of courses and

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<sup>9</sup> Schooling begins at the age of five or six, depending on the state, through elementary school, called the *Grundschule*. This stage forms the common educational cycle for all children and lasts in most states for four years. After this stage, there are three basic types of secondary education. The first type is the *Hauptschule*, completed in the 9th grade, with the *Hauptschulabschluss* diploma, which qualifies the student for vocational training models at a more basic level. The second type is the *Realschule*, completed in the 10th grade, with the *Realschulabschluss* diploma, with which students can enter a technical school. The third type is the *Gymnasium*, which is completed in 12th or 13th grade, depending on the state, with the *Abitur*, the school-leaving certificate that confers school maturity for higher education. In addition to these types of schools, there are also alternative models, in which the *Hauptschule*, *Realschule* and *Gymnasium* can be offered in integrated schools, which combine two or three different possibilities for completion (CARVALHO JUNIOR, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> In Germany, the first compulsory school stage is elementary school, the *Grundschule*, which is for children from the age of five or six. The age at which a child can start school, the cut-off date for age verification, and the number of compulsory years are regulated by each federal state by means of separate legislation..

diplomas (BISCHOFF *et al.*, 2018), thus ensuring considerable uniformity of the fundamental structure of the German educational system (MORDUCHOWIEZ; ARANGO, 2010).

The German Schools Abroad are one of the different school formats that currently make up the PASCH Network - Schulen: Partner der Zukunft (Schools: Partners of the Future)<sup>11</sup>. In this network, the Goethe Institute supervises the approximately 650 Fit Schools<sup>12</sup> worldwide, while the Central Agency for Education Abroad (Zentralstelle für das Auslandsschulwesen, ZfA) is responsible for around 1,100 DSD schools<sup>13</sup>, 27 Schools with a German Profile<sup>14</sup> and the 138 German Schools Abroad<sup>15</sup>. Of the latter, eight are located in North America<sup>16</sup>, 37 in América Latina<sup>17</sup>, 47 in Europe, 15 in Africa, 29 in Asia and two in Oceania.

The 138 German Schools Abroad have as their central objectives contact with the society and culture of the host country, the securing and expansion of school services for German children abroad and the promotion of German language teaching abroad (KLINGEBIEL, 2013). A gradual process of policy change can be observed in these schools, as "[...] whereas previously they were islands for children of embassy staff and children of employees of German companies sent abroad, most of these schools are now called encounter schools, which means that they are attended primarily by local pupils"<sup>18</sup> (ERNDL, 2019, p. 15464, author's translation). They are supervised, within the framework of curricula and official examinations, by the aforementioned Standing Conference of Ministers of Culture (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, KMK) and the Federal and State Committee for Schoolwork Abroad (*Bund-Länder-Ausschuss für schulische Arbeit im Ausland*, BLASchA) and receive funds from the budget of the Federal Foreign Office because of their direct link to German cultural diplomacy.

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<sup>11</sup> It is a network of schools created in 2008 on the initiative of the then German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

<sup>12</sup> National schools that offer German as a Foreign Language classes at a basic level or are in the process of implementing such classes.

<sup>13</sup> National schools that teach German as a foreign language and enable students to take the German Language Diploma DSD (*Deutsches Sprachdiplom*) issued by the Standing Conference of Ministers of Culture (KMK).

<sup>14</sup> National schools, in which German as a Foreign Language and at least one other subject in the German language are taught until the end of High School.

<sup>15</sup> For further information on Fit Schools, DSD Schools and German Profile Schools, see SCHMIDT (2018) and AUSWÄRTIGES (2019)..

<sup>16</sup> This number refers only to schools located in the United States and Canada. The schools in Mexico are grouped under Latin America.

<sup>17</sup> This figure refers to the total number of German Schools Abroad, located in South America, Central America and Mexico.

<sup>18</sup> "Waren sie früher Inseln für Kinder von Botschaftsangestellten und für Kinder von ins Ausland entsandten Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern deutscher Firmen, sind die meisten dieser Schulen heute sogenannte Begegnungsschulen, das heißt, sie werden überwiegend von einheimischen Schülerinnen und Schülern besucht".

Voerkel (2018) provides a historical overview of how Germany has invested in this field of cultural diplomacy since the 19th century, highlighting the creation, in the period of the Weimar Republic, of important institutions promoting culture and science, such as the German Academic Exchange Service (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*, DAAD) and the Goethe Institute. The author points out, however, that

[...] This attitude of openness to the world changed radically with the rise to power of the National Socialists and their propaganda, which brought an even very narrowly themed view of language and culture. The Second World War, which ended in 1945, left Germany as a divided country and without sovereignty over its foreign policy (which the country would only gain back in 1990) (VOERKEL, 2018, p. 147, our translation).

After the Second World War, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, Germany's foreign policy was primarily aimed at regaining the trust of its European neighbors as well as of other countries in the world. In the 1970s, the political plane was marked by important breaks, innovations, and new paradigms as foreign policy was strengthened and Cultural Policy was elevated to the status of a "third pillar" of relations with other countries, alongside classical diplomacy and economic foreign policy (WDA, 2017). Since the turn of the millennium, education has gained increasing importance, so that the "Cultural Foreign Policy" was officially renamed "Cultural and Educational Foreign Policy" in 2001 (VOERKEL, 2018). Its importance lies in the fact that

[...] not only in the economic field Germany is in competition with traditional and new competitors, but also in the cultural field [...]. Countries like Russia and China use Cultural and Educational Policy Abroad in a targeted manner in terms of political and economic positioning and invest heavily in the expansion of their foreign cultural and media institutes. The field of Cultural and Educational Foreign Policy has become denser and more complex<sup>19</sup> (ANHEIER, 2017, p. 3, authors' translation)

In the German case, the Federal Foreign Office assumes the overall coordination of cultural activities abroad, however "[...] it is mostly not government institutions that are involved in the execution of cultural activities, but rather organizations that are legally independent of the state, such as NGOs, foundations, associations, as well as private companies and individuals" (VOERKEL, 2018, p. 150). Although German Schools Abroad are supported

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<sup>19</sup> "Deutschland befindet sich nicht nur wirtschaftlich in einem Wettbewerb mit traditionellen und neuen Konkurrenten, sondern auch kulturell [...]. Länder wie Russland und China setzen die AKBP gezielt im Sinne einer politisch-wirtschaftlichen Positionierung ein und investieren massiv in den Ausbau ihrer Kulturinstitute und Auslandsmedien. Das Feld der AKBP ist dichter und komplexer geworden".



with German public funds, about 72 percent of their overall revenues, on average, are raised autonomously, through school fees, donations, or membership contributions (WIFOR, 2018).

While the responsibility for the financing and administration of schools lies mostly with their local governing bodies (as a rule, foundations or parents' associations), the main task of German government agencies focuses on quality assurance of education, mainly through regular inspections carried out jointly by the federal government and the states (BRÜSER-SOMMER, 2010), the sending of school principals and teachers qualified according to German parameters, and the formal recognition of school diplomas which, even if obtained abroad, are aligned with the school curricula in force in Germany (KLINGEBIEL, 2013).

The composition of funding sources varies considerably, and financial resources have a significant impact on the development of each school. "This is due not only to the absolute financial strength, but also to the origin of the funds. The greater, for example, the share of school fees [charged to parents] in the total budget, the greater the influence of the local governing body in its distribution"<sup>20</sup> (FÖRSCHNER, 2013, p. 31, authors' translation) This characteristic brings with it challenges in the interface between the performance of school professionals and that of the non-salaried members (volunteers) of the sponsoring entities. While volunteers generally have less time at their disposal, less knowledge of the school's organization and less information relevant to decision-making about its management, the work of school professionals is marked by their level of expertise and know-how. In the case of German Schools Abroad, this interface takes place between the honorary members of the boards of trustees and the administrative head, who assumes responsibility in financial terms, and the German school head, who is responsible for the pedagogical management of the school (KLINGEBIEL, 2013).

The tension between central regulation by the German state and the autonomy of the local governing body is present in the interactions within school management, in which context there is also often a cultural interface, since "[...] on the one hand, the board and the administrative apparatus usually come from the host country, and on the other hand, the school management comes from Germany"<sup>21</sup> (KLINGEBIEL, 2013, p. 57, authors' translation). In this perspective, Hayden and Thompson (2008, p. 61-62) point out that, "[...] in some countries, it

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<sup>20</sup> "Dies ergibt sich nicht nur durch die absolute Finanzkraft, sondern auch durch die Herkunft der Mittel. Je größer z.B. der Anteil der Schulgebühren am Gesamtbudget ist, umso stärker ist der Einfluss des Schulträgers auf deren Verteilung".

<sup>21</sup> "[...] da auf der einen Seite Vorstand und Verwaltungsapparat häufig aus dem Sitzland und auf der anderen Seite die Schulleitung aus Deutschland kommt".

is a legal requirement that international schools have an administrator from the host country in a senior position”, often with a financial manager position.

For the authors, the relationship between this local administrator and the foreign school principal is crucial to the effective functioning of the school. Because of this junction between an administrative apparatus from the host country and a school principal coming from the school's home country, the cultural dimension of these interactions plays an especially important role in the international school context, where “the role of a principal requires understanding the cultures within a school and promoting communication and understanding within and across those cultures” (KELLER, 2015, p. 907). For this reason, we emphasize the analysis of the composition of the management teams in the development of this study.

### **The Profile of German Schools in Latin America**

Over time, the founding of German Schools abroad has taken place in different ways on different continents, depending on the different political and strategic objectives set by the German authorities in each situation. In Latin America there are 37 German Schools abroad: four in Argentina, two in Bolivia, four in Brazil, five in Chile, four in Colombia, one in Costa Rica, one in El Salvador, three in Ecuador, one in Guatemala, five in Mexico, one in Nicaragua, one in Paraguay, three in Peru, one in Uruguay and one in Venezuela. A significant portion of these schools were founded in a context linked to the German migration processes to the Americas that took place, fundamentally, in the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century (BADE, 1992). Three schools were founded even before the unification of Germany in 1871 and another fifteen were founded between 1871 and 1918, that is, during the German Empire. Thus, 49% of the schools have a history that goes back to a period before the Weimar Republic.<sup>22</sup> and only one school was founded after German reunification in 1990. On the other hand, in the other regions of the world, the reality is quite different: 28% of the schools were founded before the Weimar Republic and 31% have been founded since German reunification in 1990, a period in which the network of German Schools Abroad is expanding, especially in Eastern Europe.<sup>23</sup> And Asia<sup>24</sup>.

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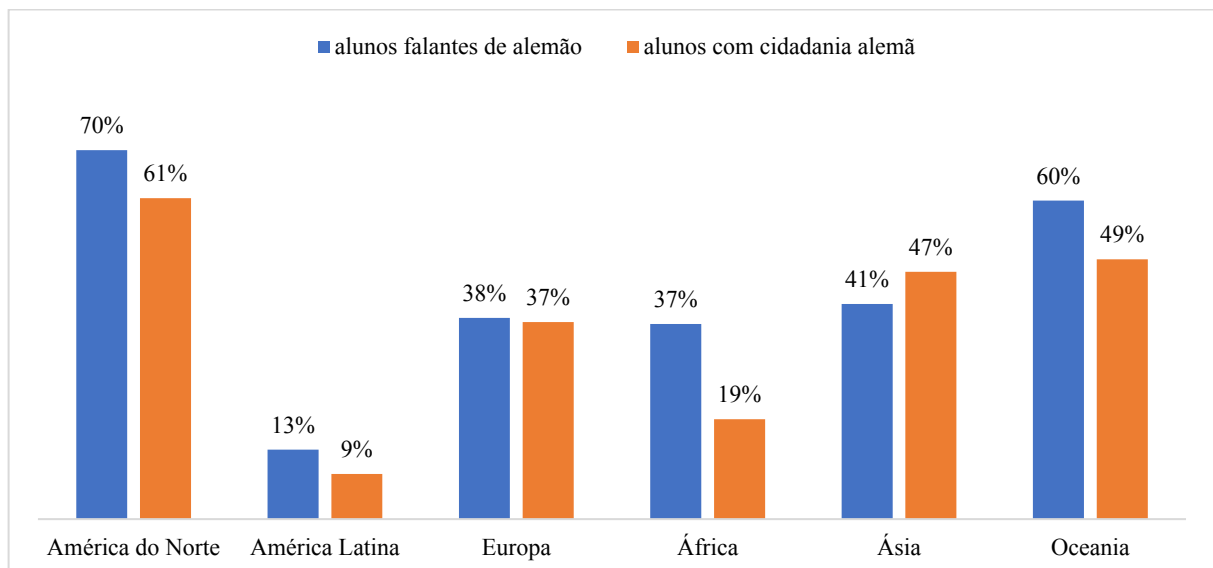
<sup>22</sup> The period between 1918, after the German capitulation at the end of World War I, and 1933, when the nationalist regime was established in Germany.

<sup>23</sup> Since 1990 German Schools have been founded in Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovakia, Georgia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Russia and Ukraine.

<sup>24</sup> Since 1990 German Schools have been founded in Qatar, China, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam.

On average the German Schools abroad in Latin America have 1,356 pupils, far more than the schools in other regions. The average in Africa is 727 students per school, while in Europe the figure is 579 students and in Asia 446 students. In North America and Oceania, schools average 314 and 265 students respectively. Thus 49% of all German Schools Abroad students attend schools in Latin America compared to only 1% of students in Oceania, 2% in North America, 10% in Africa, 12% in Asia and 26% in Europe (BUNDESVERWALTUNGSAMT, 2021). Another important feature is that the student body of the German Schools in Latin America is composed mostly of nationals of the respective countries where the schools are located. This region has the lowest proportions of native German speakers (13%) and German citizen pupils (9%) as can be seen in the Graph 1:

**Graph 1 – German-speaking students or German citizens<sup>25</sup>**



Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided in Bundesverwaltungsamt (2021)

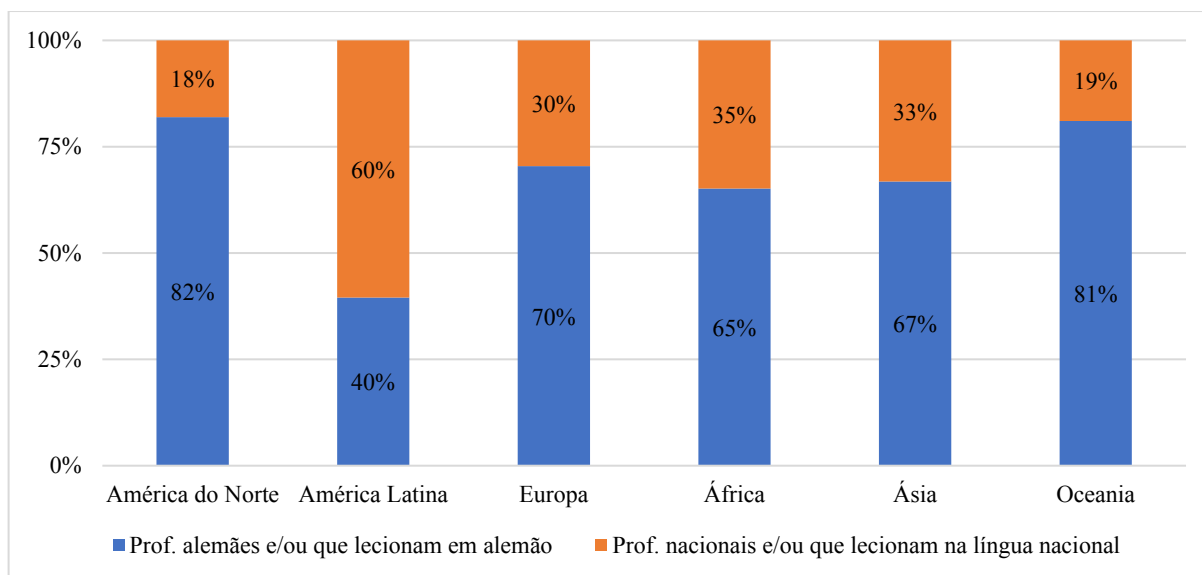
The school diplomas offered in the different regions also vary significantly <sup>26</sup>. Latin America is the only region where nearly all schools (95%) offer the national high school equivalent (which is not recognized in Germany), far more than schools in Africa (64%), North America (50%), Europe (28%) and Asia (7%). On the other hand, Latin America is the region where proportionally fewer schools (49%) offer the Abitur, the German school-leaving

<sup>25</sup> Alunos falantes de alemão = German speaking students; alunos com cidadania alemã = students with German citizenship; América do Norte = North America; América Latina = Latin America; Europa = Europe; África = Africa; Ásia = Asia; Oceania = Oceania

<sup>26</sup> The two schools in Oceania only offer international diplomas of the *Gemischtsprachiges Internationales Baccalaureate* (GIB) type, a variant of the *International Baccalaureate* (IB) diploma in which, in the last two years of the exam, at least three subjects must be taught in German: German, History and Biology or Chemistry.

qualification that enables entrance to higher education in Germany. In Asia the figure is 56%, in North America 63%, in Africa 64%, and in Europe as high as 77%. (BUNDESVERWALTUNGSAMT, 2021). The school diplomas offered have important correlations with the characteristics of the composition of both the students and the teaching staff of these schools. Again, Latin America differs from other regions in having proportionately the lowest number of German teachers and/or teachers teaching in German (40%) and the highest number of national teachers and/or teachers teaching in their national language (60%), as can be seen in Graph 2.

**Graph 2 – Distribution of teachers by language of instruction and continent<sup>27</sup>**



Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided in Bundesverwaltungsamt (2021)

It is noticeable that there are considerable regional differences between the German Schools Abroad with respect to the period of foundation of the schools, the number of pupils, the diplomas offered and the proportion of expatriate and national German pupils and teachers who study or teach there. This indicates that this policy is characterized by high ambiguity, embracing such differences and adapting to them, thus favoring an implementation strongly impacted by the contextual conditions of the schools (MATLAND, 1995).

There are significant differences in the contract types of teachers in German Schools Abroad, with two groups standing out: expatriate teachers with German contracts and local contract teachers. Those expatriate teachers on German contracts who are directly attached to

<sup>27</sup> América do Norte = North America; América Latina = Latin America; Europa = Europe; África = Africa; Ásia = Asia; Oceania = Oceania; German teachers and/or those teaching in German; Prof. nacionais e / ou que lecionam na língua nacional = National teachers and / or teaching in the national language

German official agencies can be divided into three subgroups. The first and main subgroup consists of Foreign Service Teachers (*Auslandsdienstlehrkräfte*, ADLK), civil servants or not, assigned by their states for school service abroad<sup>28</sup>. In addition to regular teaching duties, these teachers may take on special tasks such as management duties (including school management), academic and career guidance for students, responsibility for continuing teacher education, and subject and subject area coordination. The two other subgroups consist of Federal Program Teachers (*Bundesprogrammlehrkräfte*, BPLK)<sup>29</sup> and the State Program Teachers (*Landesprogrammlehrkräfte*, LPLK)<sup>30</sup> (BOLLINGER, 2019; FÖRSCHNER, 2013; WDA, 2017).

In 2002, 24.2% of the teachers at German Schools Abroad were expatriates on German contracts, but this share decreased in 2012 to 20.1% (ADICK, 2017) and to only 14.4% in 2021, according to the data in the Directory of Schools Abroad (BUNDESVERWALTUNGSSAMT, 2021). Thus, in 2021 85.6 percent of the teachers fell into the category of Local Contract Teachers (*Ortslehrkräfte*, OLK). These teachers are hired directly by the school contracting authorities, in accordance with the labor regulations in force in the host country. A small portion of these locally hired teachers (7.7%) originally belonged to the German school system<sup>31</sup>, but the vast majority (77.9%) had no ties to the German school system. As Graph 3 shows, the ratio between German contract expatriate teachers and local contract teachers varies significantly across continents, with Latin America being the region with the largest difference between these two groups - 9% of teachers are German contract expatriates and 91% have a local contract.

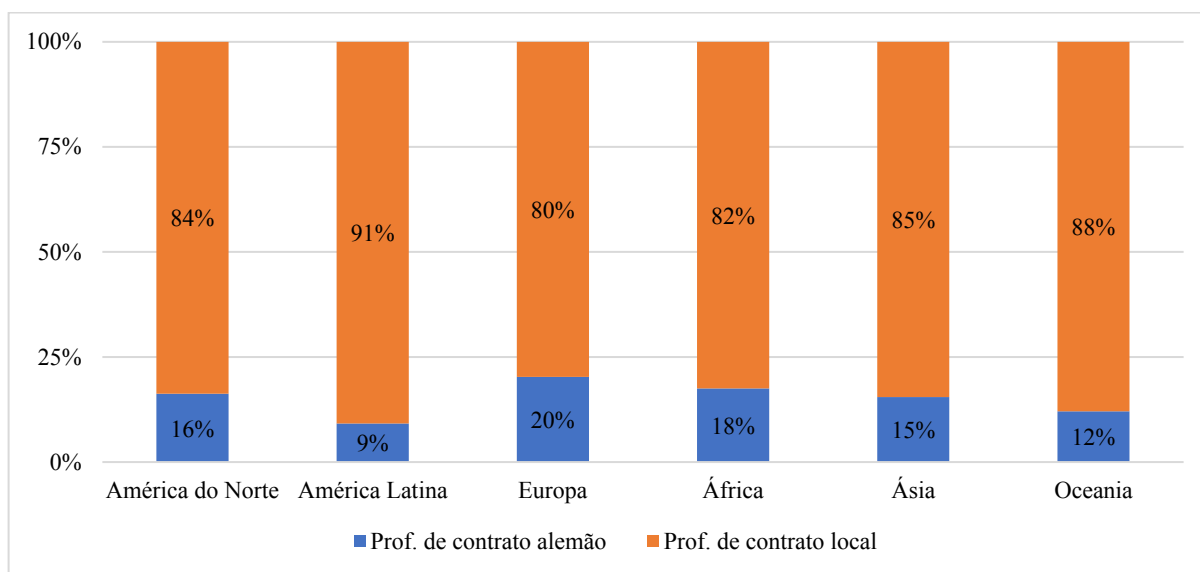
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<sup>28</sup> Generally, the contract is valid for a period of three years with the possibility of renewal for another three years and the remuneration is based on the salary in Germany with increments that vary according to the place of work abroad.

<sup>29</sup> Teachers whose contracts are for two years and, with the agreement of the ZfA and the school, can be extended for up to six years.

<sup>30</sup> Teachers on loan from their home states in Germany to work primarily in the development and expansion of German as a foreign language in schools in the Baltic States, Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia.

<sup>31</sup> These are teachers with qualifications and recognition according to German standards who are active in the German school system and apply directly for available positions in German schools abroad without the intermediation of the ZfA. These teachers obtain a license from their employers (usually the German states) and are hired directly by the school authorities.

**Graph 3 – Distribution of teachers by type of contract and continent**

Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data provided in Bundesverwaltungsamt (2021)

Since only 14.4% of the teachers at German Schools Abroad were sent abroad by the official German agencies, it is the schools that end up hiring and managing directly not only the national teachers, responsible for teaching the national curricula in their respective languages, but also, most of the teachers with the necessary qualifications for the German language educational project. In the Latin American case, while 40% of the teachers are German or teach in German, only 9% are expatriates and the rest (31%) are hired locally by the schools.

Although only 23.5 percent of the pupils in German Schools Abroad are German citizens and 85.6 percent of all teachers, including those who teach in German and their national languages, have local employment contracts, German bodies confer responsibility for educational management exclusively on expatriate German school principals. It should be noted that the German principal's service contract submitted by the ZfA (2016, n.p., authors' translation) provides that the principal undertakes to run the school "[...] in the sense of the German Cultural and Educational Policy Abroad and in the interest of the school's governing body, taking into account the regulations of the host country"<sup>32</sup>. According to this contract, he is "[...] responsible for the educational management of the school"<sup>33</sup> and "[...] in school pedagogical matters, only the principal is responsible for giving instructions to the teaching

<sup>32</sup> “[...] im Sinne der deutschen Auswärtigen Kultur- und Bildungspolitik und im Interesse des Schulträgers unter Berücksichtigung der Vorschriften des Gastlandes”.

<sup>33</sup> “Für die pädagogische Leitung der Schule”.

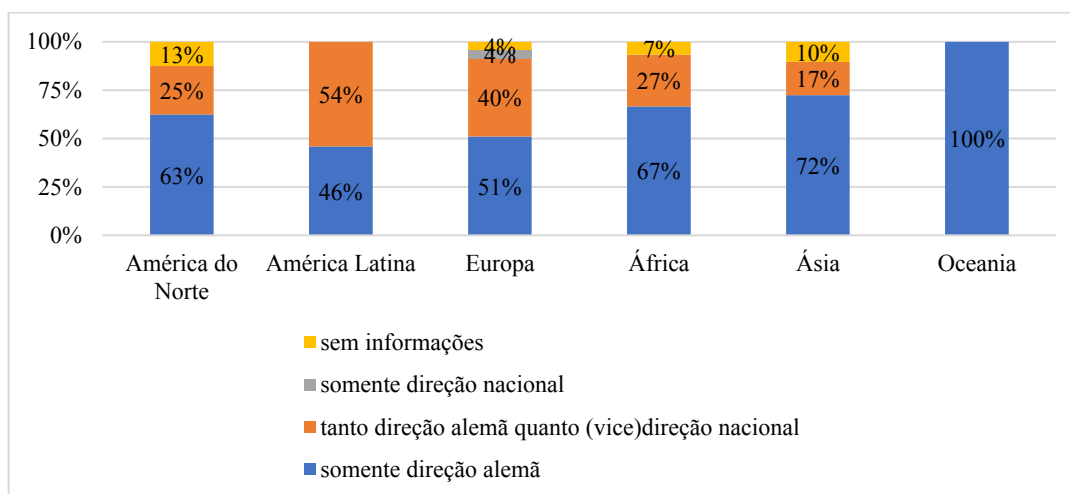
staff”<sup>34</sup>, and he is “[...] the superior of all staff employed at the school. Instructions to school employees are issued only by the principal”<sup>35</sup> (ZFA, 2016, n.p., authors’ translation).

Bollinger (2019) draws attention to the fact that a national principal, hired directly by the school without the intermediation of German bodies, often integrates the school management team together with this expatriate German principal in the case of schools that also offer national school diplomas. This points to adaptation mechanisms by the schools, as an exercise of their built autonomy (BARROSO, 1996; 2004) according to the political, administrative and pedagogical specificities articulated in the local perspective. This aspect is corroborated by the visibility of the management in the way schools represent themselves on their institutional pages on the Internet, according to a survey conducted for this study. Despite the fact that the German authorities attribute exclusive responsibility for educational management to expatriate German school principals, it is possible to identify in the institutional presentations on the Internet of the 138 schools, in 37% of the cases, some national instance of school management or vice-school management. However, this national steering presence varies considerably from region to region, as can be seen in Graph 4. Latin America is the region where, proportionally, this occurs most frequently, in 54% of the schools, followed by Europe (44%), Africa (27%), North America (25%), and Asia (17%).

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<sup>34</sup> “In schulisch-pädagogischen Angelegenheiten ist ausschließlich der Schulleiter verantwortlich und zuständig, entsprechende Weisungen an das Lehrpersonal zu geben”.

<sup>35</sup> “Der Schulleiter ist Vorgesetzter des gesamten an der Schule beschäftigten Personals. Weisungen an das Schulpersonal ergehen ausschließlich über den Schulleiter”.

**Graph 4 – Representation of school management by continent<sup>36</sup>**

Source: Prepared by the author based on data from the official web pages of the German Schools Abroad that are part of the Directory of Schools Abroad, August 2021 survey (BUNDESVERWALTUNGSAMT, 2021)

This phenomenon occurs outside the determinations of German bodies, without, however, constituting a violation of the prerogatives established by them, since this policy carries an important mark of ambiguity (MATLAND, 1995) by establishing the mandatory presence of a German headmaster, without mentioning the presence or absence of a national governing body (ZFA, 2016, 2018). This omission regarding the national instances of school management seems to mitigate the potential conflict that could arise, at the local level, due to the possible expectations of local families of dialogue with a school principal who knows their culture and speaks their language, which does not necessarily occur with German principals, or of the local educational authorities to which they are subjected, since, besides being part of the German Schools Abroad network, these schools are also inserted in the respective local school systems of the host countries.

In this way, the policy can experience a form of implementation that is very permeable to contextual conditions at the local level. Although the figure of the national principal is not recognized as an element of decision-making in the management of the educational and cultural policy exercised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he or she is present in several schools and potentially plays a relevant role in the implementation of the policy at the local level, notably marked - especially in Latin America - by the strong presence of students and teachers from the host countries and by the eventual demands of the respective local authorities.

<sup>36</sup> sem informações = no information or data; somente direção nacional = national management only; tanto direção alemã quanto (vice)direção nacional = both German management and national (vice)management; somente direção alemã = German management only



## Final remarks

The 138 German Schools Abroad, established in 69 countries as an expression of the education and culture policy pursued by the Federal Foreign Office, have a number of characteristics in common. They are subject to the control of the German agencies directly involved in the system, which assume responsibility for different areas or dimensions of quality of the schools (ZFA, 2006). These different dimensions of quality materialize both in the teaching and learning processes, a condition for the recognition and equivalence of foreign diplomas, and in the organizational and administrative processes, since German public resources are directly invested in these schools.

On the other hand, the data collected in this study authorize the formulation of the hypothesis that there are different local factors that mark the identity and management of these schools. The Quality Framework for German Schools Abroad, a document that describes the tasks and objectives of these schools within the framework of Germany's Cultural and Educational Policy Abroad, states that these schools must increasingly orient themselves "[...] profoundly according to the developments in international markets with regard to education in order to secure their existence" (ZFA, 2006, p. 2) and that in this context it is desirable that their identity also be marked by the characteristics of the host country. Thus, the ZfA recognizes that the German Schools Abroad operate in very different contexts and that they are not strictly German educational spaces, detached from the sociocultural context in which they operate.

The document of School Quality Management Abroad (*Auslandsschulqualitätsmanagement*, AQM), which describes the incumbencies and goals of these schools, points out that "[...] different legal contexts, historically constructed traditions, and different interests mark the educational programs, school life, and identities of schools" (ZFA, 2018, p. 5, authors' translation). Thus,

[...] Each German school abroad has its own school development strategy and is individually responsible for the realization of its goals. This strategy is generally guided by local conditions, the competitive situation in the local context of the school and the expectations of customers as well as the quality requirements of the (German) funding and subsidizing agencies.<sup>37</sup> (ZFA, 2018, p. 6, our translation).

<sup>37</sup> "Jede Deutsche Auslandsschule verfügt dabei über eine eigene Schulentwicklungsstrategie und verantwortet individuell die Umsetzung ihrer Ziele. Diese Strategie orientiert sich i. d. R. an den lokalen Bedingungen, der Wettbewerbssituation am Bildungsstandort und den Kundenerwartungen sowie den Qualitätsanforderungen der fördernden Stellen".

The implementation of German cultural and educational policy abroad is realized through a cooperation model in which the German state and private non-profit associations act as partners at the head of German Schools Abroad. This cooperation between German public authorities and private organizations at the local level is one of the main characteristics of these schools, in a policy design that articulates common determinations and expectations outlined centrally by the German authorities, while at the same time allowing for considerable formal heterogeneity and favoring the establishment of decision-making space at the local school level.

Latin America is the case where the ambiguity of the policy is expressed in a particularly clear way. This region has the largest number of pupils - almost half of all pupils at German Schools Abroad - and the largest share of pupils with no ties (linguistic or citizenship) to Germany. Latin America is also the region where the supply of national school diplomas is the most significant and where there is the greatest presence of teachers with local contracts and who teach in the respective national languages. These characteristics also converge to a peculiar role of local actors in school management, with the largest presence, among all the regions of the globe, of national authorities in the presentation of schools on their official web pages. From the analysis of a set of data regarding German Schools Abroad in the light of studies on public policy implementation, it is possible to infer that the degrees of ambiguity and autonomy in the way these schools are managed - in the design of German Cultural and Educational Policy Abroad - constitute a condition for their permeability and adaptation to local realities that are so different from each other.

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