

Data Governance in Education: Addressing Challenges and Unlocking Opportunities for Effective Data Management

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Keywords: Data Governance, Data Quality, Data Security, Data Interoperability, Data Integration, Educational Ecosystems.

Abstract: This study investigates the pivotal role of data governance in driving digital transformation within the education sector. It highlights the importance of improving data quality, security, interoperability, and integration to establish efficient and transparent educational data ecosystems. The analysis reveals significant challenges, including fragmented adoption of governance practices, the absence of tailored public policies, and a lack of standardized metrics to measure governance impacts. Additional barriers, such as compatibility issues with legacy systems and insufficient technical training, hinder the effective implementation of data governance strategies. This research emphasizes the need for collaborative and interdisciplinary efforts to address these challenges, advocating for developing practical, scalable, and context-specific solutions. By tackling these issues, data governance can be firmly established as a cornerstone for innovation, improved decision-making, and enhanced transparency and equity in the education sector, ultimately supporting its digital transformation and long-term sustainability.

1 INTRODUCTION

The education sector is undergoing profound transformations driven by the increasing digitization of processes and data (Kshirsagar, 2024). Educational institutions generate, collect, and store growing volumes of information on students, teachers, curricula, and public policies, highlighting the importance of robust management practices and responsible data use (Curry et al., 2022). In this context, data governance emerges as a strategic pillar for ensuring data quality, integration, and security (International, 2017).

Reliable and integrated data are essential for evidence-based decisions, formulating public policies, and personalizing pedagogical practices. However, challenges such as data fragmentation, redundancy, and the absence of clear interoperability standards persist (Castañeda and Gourlay, 2023). Without adequate governance practices, institutions struggle to maintain accessible, accurate, and ethically used data (Bazaluk et al., 2024).

Implementing data governance strategies offers significant benefits, including operational efficiency, improved teaching quality, and greater transparency in public management (Hendrawan et al., 2023). Additionally, it facilitates interoperability between educational systems, promoting the exchange of information and enabling a holistic view of academic performance at local, regional, and national levels.

Despite its importance, data governance frameworks tailored specifically for education are limited (Castañeda and Gourlay, 2023). Many existing models were designed for sectors like healthcare or finance, failing to address the specificities of academic institutions. This gap in contextualized tools and practices hampers the widespread adoption of data governance strategies in education, limiting their potential impact (Volkov et al., 2023).

This article explores the importance of data governance in education, focusing on its challenges, opportunities, and best practices to guide effective implementation. It aims to advance the discussion and propose solutions to improve data integration and quality, enhance educational management, and support digital transformation. A central question addressed is how existing data governance frameworks can be adapted

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to the education sector to overcome data fragmentation and system integration issues.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents key concepts and data governance frameworks. Section 3 offers a literature review on educational data governance, while Section 4 discusses the major challenges identified. Section 5 contextualizes these challenges within the Brazilian educational ecosystem, and Section 6 concludes with recommendations for future research.

2 DATA GOVERNANCE

This section defines data governance and presents key frameworks that ensure data quality, security, and ethical use. It highlights five prominent frameworks offering structured methodologies for managing data governance applicable across sectors, including education.

2.1 Basic Concepts

Data governance is the framework of processes, policies, standards, and technologies designed to manage an organization's data assets responsibly (International, 2017; Henninger, 2022). It spans the entire data lifecycle, ensuring accuracy, security, accessibility, and regulatory compliance (International, 2017). In education, data governance aids institutions in managing complex datasets from students, teachers, and policymakers.

Effective data governance is guided by core principles: data quality ensures accuracy and reliability; data security protects sensitive information; and data transparency clarifies how data is collected, processed, and used (International, 2017). Additionally, data accountability assigns responsibility for integrity and compliance, while data stewardship manages data throughout its lifecycle. Data standardization ensures consistent formats and definitions, promoting interoperability and reducing redundancy. Data privacy safeguards personal information, ensuring ethical handling under regulatory frameworks.

Data accessibility allows authorized users to retrieve and utilize data, supporting timely decision-making. Data interoperability facilitates seamless exchange across systems (Hendrawan et al., 2023), and data integration unifies information from multiple sources, breaking silos and improving insights. Together, these principles build trust, foster data-driven decision-making, and support strategic goals.

2.2 Frameworks

This section presents five key data governance frameworks relevant across various industries, including education. The DAMA-DMBOK framework provides a comprehensive guide covering governance, quality, and architecture, aligning data management with organizational goals and addressing integration challenges in education (International, 2017).

COBIT, developed by ISACA, integrates data governance within IT governance, aligning technology practices with business objectives. It offers clear policies, roles, and performance measures, enhancing decision-making through accountability and transparency (ISACA, 2018). Similarly, the IBM Data Governance Framework focuses on policies, roles, and technologies, improving efficiency and managing sensitive data, particularly useful in large educational environments (Soares, 2010).

The DCAM model assesses and improves data management capabilities, including a maturity assessment to identify governance gaps. Originally used in finance, it is adaptable to education (Chu and Wang, 2023). Lastly, the FAIR Principles focus on data usability and interoperability, promoting standardized metadata and open data practices, fostering collaboration and innovation in academic contexts (Kush et al., 2020).

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is structured as follows: it starts with an overview of the research methodology, followed by an analysis of the state of the art, which explores recent advancements and trends in the field. Lastly, the challenges identified in the reviewed studies are addressed, with a focus on the issues that remain to be tackled in order to advance data governance, integration, and interoperability.

3.1 Methodology

This study conducted a structured literature review, employing rigorous methods to identify, select, and evaluate studies on data governance, interoperability, and integration. The search strategy, detailed in Figure 1, combined relevant terms with Boolean operators. Searches were performed in Science Direct, PubMed, Springer, ACM, IEEE, and Scopus, focusing on publications from 2018 to 2024 to capture recent advancements. As a result, 1512 studies were retrieved based on titles and keywords.

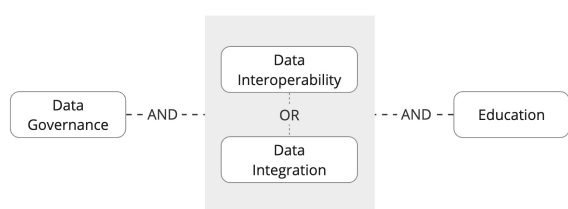


Figure 1: Search Strategy.

In the initial analysis, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, selecting only full, open-access articles directly related to the study topics, while excluding duplicates, unrelated publications, book chapters, and other formats. The retrieved studies were organized using specialized tools, and a first filtering, based on abstracts and conclusions, identified 59 potential articles for detailed review. In the second filtering, thorough reading reduced the selection to 18 articles, which were analyzed for their contributions and compatibility with the research theme. These articles informed the state-of-the-art review, highlighting intersections, common points, and existing research gaps, as illustrated in Figure 2.

3.2 State of the Art Analysis

The analysis of selected studies highlights advancements in data governance and digital transformation in education, emphasizing the role of cross-sector solutions. Key studies, such as (Miao et al., 2019), compare open data initiatives in China and the UK, showing discrepancies in governance practices. The UK's success in implementing standardized platforms contrasts with China's data disorganization, underscoring the need for structured governance.

Studies like (Otoo-Arthur and van Zyl, 2020) and (Feng et al., 2021) introduce technological solutions like Big Data, IoT, and cloud computing to enhance scalability, security, and data integration in education. Additionally, blockchain technology, explored in (Hillman and Ganesh, 2019) and (Rani et al., 2023), offers solutions for ensuring data integrity, privacy, and transparency, highlighting its significance in addressing ethical challenges within educational systems.

The integration of educational data is explored by (Huang, 2023), which advocates for the iPaaS platform to enhance university efficiency and improve data literacy. Similarly, (Williamson, 2018) discusses the "datification of higher education," focusing on how data infrastructures shape decision-making processes in alignment with social and economic goals. In the broader context of data governance, (Wang and Huang, 2021) explores data integration to improve efficiency in Chinese universities, while (Mojun and

Tingmin, 2022) suggests governance algorithms to optimize systems and teaching processes. Additionally, (Astuti et al., 2024) highlights cultural and political barriers to data governance in Indonesia, emphasizing the importance of aligning practices with local contexts.

These studies reveal uneven progress in data governance and digital transformation in education, with notable trends in technology integration, scalability, and interoperability. However, challenges related to institutional, cultural, and political factors persist. To overcome these barriers, future research must focus on tailoring technological solutions to local contexts, promoting operational efficiency, and ensuring equitable access. Examining practices from other sectors with proven security and system integration methodologies is critical for improving educational data management.

In agriculture, (Kawtrakul et al., 2021) emphasizes the importance of interoperability and collaboration for advancing sustainability, showcasing the BIO-AGRI-WATCH model for optimizing resource use and supporting strategic decisions. This model aligns with other sectors' efforts to integrate data into distributed systems, highlighting the universal benefits of interoperable solutions for complex challenges.

In manufacturing, (Durão et al., 2024) and (Stahl et al., 2023) explore how Digital Twins and data-driven business models enhance operational efficiency and competitiveness. Their work, which demonstrates the potential for real-time data integration to revolutionize industrial processes, offers insights that could also benefit sectors like healthcare and public management. In health, (Kush et al., 2020), (Almeida and Oliveira, 2024), and (Li and Quinn, 2024) highlight the role of interoperability and security standards such as the FAIR principles and GDPR, addressing privacy and data portability challenges. Similarly, in public management, studies by (Haneem et al., 2019) and (Zanti et al., 2022) show how Integrated Data Systems (IDS) can modernize administration and enhance social policies, underscoring the value of collaboration across sectors to overcome organizational and technical barriers.

These studies highlight that data governance is essential for efficiency, innovation, and sustainability across sectors. By aligning practices, standards, and technologies, organizations can improve interoperability and create integrated ecosystems to address global digital transformation challenges. This alignment fosters collaboration and data sharing, driving progress in various fields while meeting the demands of a connected, data-driven world.

After reviewing the state of the art, the eighteen

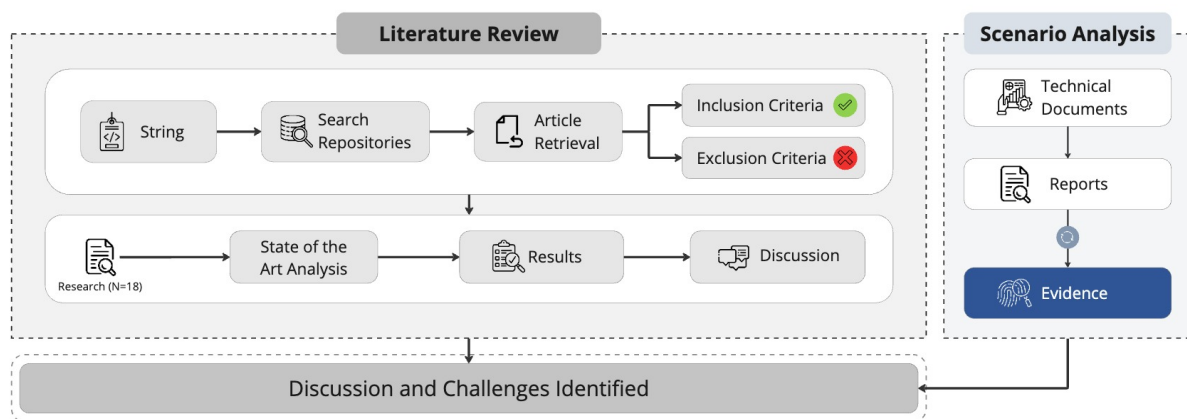


Figure 2: Methodological Approach.

selected articles were categorized according to their primary focus, as shown in Table 1. To provide a more comprehensive evaluation, data integration and interoperability were treated as distinct categories, even though they are subfields of data governance. This approach facilitated a deeper exploration of their individual contributions and challenges. The resulting categories are:

- **Data Integration (DI):** studies that explore methods and best practices for integrating data effectively.
- **Data Interoperability (DINT):** articles dealing with standards and protocols to ensure interaction between different systems.
- **Data Governance (DG):** works dealing with policies, processes, and frameworks for data management, control, and security.
- **Practical Solutions (PS):** studies that present practical solutions to any of the previous categories, in simulated or real contexts.

3.3 Discussion

As shown in Table 1, of the 18 selected articles, eight focus on practical experiments, nine explore data governance technologies and architectures, five address data integration technologies, and seven examine data interoperability technologies. Many articles span multiple categories, reflecting the interconnected nature of these areas, though each primarily emphasizes one focus. Only one study, by (Almeida and Oliveira, 2024), comprehensively covers all mapped areas, providing a holistic view of data governance, integration, and interoperability.

The reviewed studies explore various aspects of data governance, such as organizational structures

and frameworks, but practical examples are scarce. For instance, (Miao et al., 2019), (Zanti et al., 2022), and (Durão et al., 2024) rely on simulated data, lacking real-world validation. This highlights the need for more empirical research to bridge theory and practice. Additionally, studies on big data technologies often overlook limitations and feasibility, reducing their applicability and hindering progress.

Studies such as (Miao et al., 2019), (Almeida and Oliveira, 2024), (Feng et al., 2021), (Williamson, 2018), (Kawtrakul et al., 2021), (Hillman and Ganesh, 2019), (Kush et al., 2020), and (Li and Quinn, 2024) focus on interoperability, emphasizing the logistics of information access. While these studies validate processes within specific scenarios, they often struggle to replicate results in different contexts. Research on integration and interoperability, such as (Rani et al., 2023), (Otoo-Arthur and van Zyl, 2020), and (Mojun and Tingmin, 2022), faces difficulties in establishing consistent, universally applicable standards, complicating efforts to achieve scalable and adaptable solutions.

In the field of interoperability, authors like (Li and Quinn, 2024), (Rani et al., 2023), and (Hillman and Ganesh, 2019) highlight blockchain technology for its strengths in security, traceability, and atomicity. However, its effective application is hindered by challenges such as the handling of data outside the cryptographic environment and a lack of regulations on data portability. These limitations restrict blockchain's broader adoption, emphasizing the need for both technological advancements and regulatory frameworks to address these gaps.

In general, studies like (Wang and Huang, 2021), (Feng et al., 2021), (Williamson, 2018), and (Stahl et al., 2023) explore data governance in data-driven organizations and its broader impacts. Meanwhile, works such as (Kawtrakul et al., 2021), (Almeida and

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Related Works, Focus Areas, and Domains.

Related Work	Focus Area				Domain	
	DI	DINT	DG	PS	Education	Others
(Miao et al., 2019)	○	●	○	○	●	○
(Otoo-Arthur and van Zyl, 2020)	○	○	●	●	●	○
(Mojun and Tingmin, 2022)	○	○	○	○	●	○
(Rani et al., 2023)	○	●	●	○	●	○
(Hillman and Ganesh, 2019)	●	○	●	●	●	○
(Feng et al., 2021)	●	●	●	○	●	○
(Wang and Huang, 2021)	●	○	○	●	●	○
(Kawtrakul et al., 2021)	○	●	○	●	○	●
(Huang, 2023)	○	○	●	●	●	○
(Williamson, 2018)	○	●	○	○	●	○
(Stahl et al., 2023)	○	○	○	○	○	●
(Haneem et al., 2019)	○	○	●	●	○	●
(Zanti et al., 2022)	●	○	○	○	○	●
(Durão et al., 2024)	●	●	○	○	○	●
(Kush et al., 2020)	○	●	○	○	○	●
(Astuti et al., 2024)	○	○	●	●	●	○
(Almeida and Oliveira, 2024)	●	●	●	●	○	●
(Li and Quinn, 2024)	○	○	●	○	○	●

Oliveira, 2024), (Zanti et al., 2022), (Durão et al., 2024), (Astuti et al., 2024), (Huang, 2023), and (Haneem et al., 2019) detail implementations in specific contexts, though their results remain constrained. The lack of comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analyses in these studies raises concerns about the scalability and effectiveness of the proposed applications. Figure 3 outlines the key gaps and challenges identified, highlighting four key areas for further investigation.

4 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

The literature analysis identified several challenges hindering the implementation of data governance, interoperability, and integration strategies across sectors, including education. These challenges encompass technical, regulatory, cultural, and institutional barriers that complicate the adoption and scalability of solutions. This section highlights key obstacles and their implications for future research and practical applications. Addressing these issues can improve the effectiveness and impact of data-driven initiatives.

Collaboration among stakeholders is vital for integration yet is rarely explored in-depth regarding procedures, challenges, and successes. Studies by (Miao et al., 2019) and (Astuti et al., 2024) discuss government open data initiatives, emphasizing the significant role of policies and non-technical stakeholders in the success of these efforts, pointing to the need for more comprehensive analysis of stakeholder collaboration in data integration.

In addition to the previously identified gaps, the lack of specific public policies for educational data governance is a significant barrier to progress. While some government initiatives have promoted open data policies, they often lack clear guidelines for managing educational data, particularly in areas like interoperability, integration, and data protection. This underscores the need for closer collaboration among educational institutions, governments, and stakeholders to develop regulations and standards that can guide effective data management, promote innovation, and ensure ethical and secure practices.

Another critical issue is the lack of standardized methodologies for measuring and evaluating the impacts of data governance in education. While general indicators exist in sectors like healthcare and

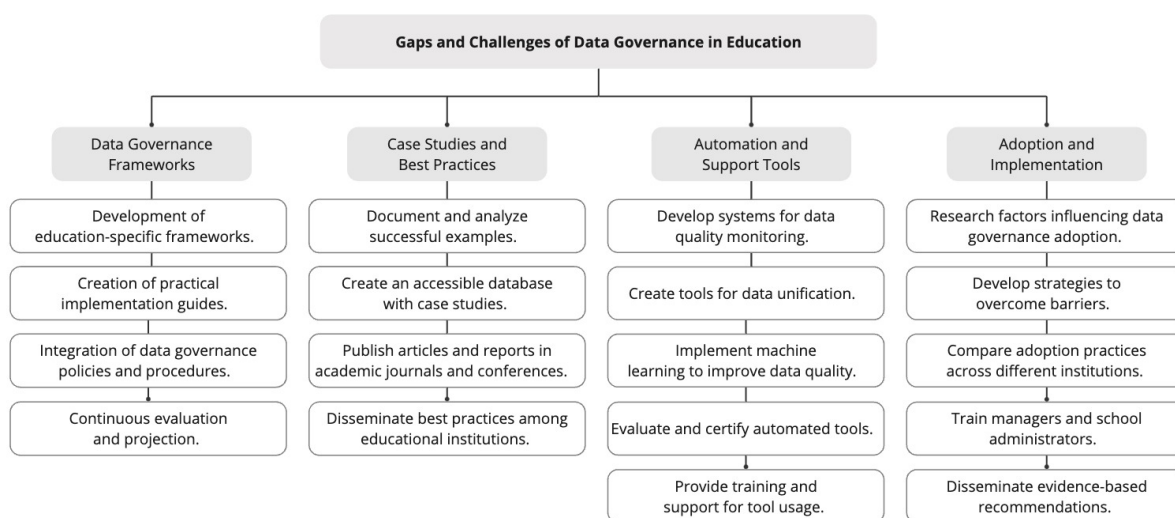


Figure 3: Gaps and Challenges of Data Governance in Education.

business, the education sector requires tailored metrics that reflect its unique characteristics, such as impacts on teaching quality, administrative efficiency, and data protection for students and educators. Developing specific indicators would enable effective evaluation of current initiatives, facilitate comparisons, and identify areas for improvement. These metrics are essential for guiding policy development and driving continuous improvement in educational data governance.

In the field of interoperability, the adoption of international standards must be strengthened to improve connectivity and efficiency within education. While these standards are well-established in other sectors, their implementation in education remains fragmented, facing challenges like compatibility with legacy systems and lack of technical training. To address these issues, it is crucial to promote consistent use of these standards and invest in technical support and capacity-building initiatives. These efforts will help create a more integrated educational ecosystem, enabling seamless data exchange and better collaboration among institutions.

Additionally, awareness of ethics and security in data governance must be raised. As educational institutions deal with increasing volumes of data, issues such as privacy, consent, and responsible use become even more critical. Awareness campaigns and the inclusion of ethical guidelines in governance frameworks can help mitigate risks and promote an organizational culture focused on protecting sensitive data.

Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain present an opportunity to improve educational data governance, with AI optimizing data management and blockchain ensuring

security and transparency. However, their adoption requires thorough feasibility studies and the development of guidelines tailored to the education sector's needs, aligning with educational objectives, ethics, and regulations. These challenges and opportunities emphasize the need for a focused research agenda, involving collaboration among policymakers, researchers, technologists, and educators, to establish data governance as a key driver of digital transformation and innovation in education.

5 CHALLENGES FACING THE BRAZILIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

In addition to analyzing the state of the art, this study investigated whether the challenges identified in the literature are present in the daily operations of the Brazilian education system, focusing on data governance. An in-depth analysis of public policy documents from the Ministry of Education and oversight reports on government policies and student financial incentives aimed to bridge the gap between theoretical challenges and real-world implications. Serving over 47 million students across more than 178,500 schools in 5,570 municipalities (Inep, 2023b; Inep, 2023a), the Brazilian education system is one of the largest and most complex globally. It is highly decentralized, with responsibilities shared among federal, state, and municipal levels, and its diverse educational landscape spans early childhood, elementary, and high school institutions of varying sizes, resources, and infrastructure.



Figure 4: Overview of Basic Education in Brazil. Fonte: (Inep, 2023b).

The diversity of the Brazilian education system poses significant challenges for the Ministry of Education (MEC) in formulating and implementing effective public policies. A major issue is the heterogeneity of data collection methods, reporting formats, and digital infrastructure, leading to fragmented and inconsistent datasets that hinder monitoring of indicators such as attendance, performance, and resource allocation. Disparities in technological capacity further complicate data management, especially in rural and underserved schools lacking reliable digital systems. These challenges underscore the urgent need for a robust data governance framework to ensure data quality, interoperability, and integration, supporting equitable and evidence-based public policies.

- **Data Quality.** A major concern is the inconsistency and unreliability of data, such as incomplete records and outdated information, which hinder decision-making and evidence-based policies.
- **Interoperability.** The lack of interoperability leads to fragmented datasets across agencies, obstructing integrated analysis and efficient resource allocation.
- **Traceability.** The absence of traceability mechanisms complicates the monitoring of resources and the verification of policy objectives, making accountability challenging.

The evidence from the state of the practice emphasizes the need for further research and practical solutions to help the education sector implement effective

data governance strategies. Challenges like fragmented data systems and inconsistent quality highlight the importance of tailored frameworks for education. Addressing these issues requires both theoretical advancements and actionable solutions that can be scaled across diverse contexts, ultimately improving transparency, accountability, and efficiency in managing educational data.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This study explores the transformative potential of data governance in driving digital transformation in the education sector. Despite progress, several gaps remain, including the lack of tailored public policies, standardized metrics to evaluate impacts, and insufficient technical training for implementing interoperability standards. These challenges, compounded by legacy systems, fragmented data sources, and regulatory inconsistencies, hinder the effective implementation of comprehensive data governance strategies.

Focusing on the Brazilian educational scenario, the study identifies challenges such as data heterogeneity, technological disparities, and a lack of traceability, which obstruct integration, transparency, and accountability. Addressing these requires context-specific policies, frameworks, and a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach involving policymakers, educators, researchers, and technologists to develop scalable and effective solutions.

The study emphasizes the importance of adapting data governance frameworks to the unique characteristics of the education sector, promoting interoperability, and building technical capacity. Emerging technologies like AI and blockchain can enhance data quality, security, and transparency, further advancing digital transformation. Ultimately, robust data governance is essential for fostering equitable, efficient, and transparent educational ecosystems.

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