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The Impact of Management Strategies on Educational Quality in Latin America: A Systematic Review

Impacto de las estrategias gerenciales en la calidad educativa latinoamericana: una revisión sistemática

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Abstract

Management strategies are crucial for improving educational quality, and this study focused on demonstrating how management strategies impact the educational quality of basic education in Latin America. This study was based on a systematic review following the PRISMA statement. The literature search was conducted between July and September 2025, using the Scopus, Web of Science, and Scielo databases, with a focus on identifying indexed articles published between 2021 and 2025. During the initial identification process, a total of 389 articles were retrieved; of these, only 30 were selected following the inclusion and eligibility criteria. This study concluded that distributed leadership and human capital management are key predictors of sustained improvement. In this regard, management exhibits structural limitations such as a lack of systematic planning and a disconnect between training and managerial practice. Finally, to achieve sustained improvement, it would be essential to strengthen inclusive leadership and administrative capacity, so that decisions regarding strategic management enhance the available infrastructure and resources.

Keywords: Education management, educational quality, basic education.

Resumen

Las estrategias de gestión son cruciales para la mejora de la calidad educativa, y este estudio se centró en mostrar cómo las estrategias de gestión impactan en la calidad educativa de la educación básica latinoamericana. Este trabajo se fundamentó en una revisión sistemática por medio de la declaración PRISMA. La búsqueda de los artículos se realizó entre julio y septiembre de 2025, utilizando las bases de datos Scopus, Web of Science y Scielo, con un enfoque en la búsqueda de artículos indexados que fueron publicados entre los años 2021 y 2025. En el proceso de identificación inicial se recuperaron un total de 389 artículos, de los cuales tras los criterios de inclusión y de elegibilidad sólo seleccionamos 30 artículos. De este estudio se concluyó que el liderazgo distribuido y la gestión del capital humano son predictores claves de la mejora sostenida. En este sentido, la gestión muestra limitaciones de carácter estructural como la planificación sistemática, desconexión de formación y práctica directiva. Finalmente, para conseguir una mejora sostenida, sería clave reforzar el liderazgo inclusivo

y la capacidad administrativa, de tal forma que las decisiones respecto a la gestión estratégica mejoren la infraestructura y los recursos disponibles.

Palabras clave: Gestión de la educación, calidad de la educación, educación básica.

Introduction

Within the current landscape of basic education, school management faces persistent challenges related to transparency, efficiency, and its capacity to respond to the needs of students, families, and educational communities. The functioning of educational institutions hinges on their human capital (principals, teachers, and support staff) with school leadership and teacher competencies playing a necessary role in communicating institutional policies (Mustoip et al., 2023). Within this framework, managerial strategies emerge as fundamental elements for both educational quality and the social standing of schools (McDaniel et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the applicability and effectiveness of these strategies vary considerably across countries due to differing political, economic, and institutional contexts, leading to marked disparities in institutional outcomes and in how schools meet quality standards (Anand et al., 2023).

Managerial strategies encompass a set of planned actions aimed at optimizing the organization, coordination, and oversight of human, financial, and material resources within schools (Brion & Kıral, 2021). They directly affect administrator and teacher productivity and performance, while also shaping the implementation of policies and programs. These strategies include planning, leadership distribution, results monitoring, staff professional development, and the establishment of evaluation mechanisms (Günçavdi-Alabay, 2023). Sound school management can facilitate the achievement of educational goals, enhance institutional reputation, and build trust among students, families, and the broader school community.

Educational quality, in turn, is understood as a certain level of excellence in the delivery of teaching-learning processes, encompassing both access to opportunities and effectiveness in the comprehensive development of students. Its criteria include academic achievement, the cultivation of cognitive and socio-emotional competencies, educational inclusion, and the satisfaction of students and families (Girmanová et al., 2022). In this context, meritocracy in schools has been presented as a key mechanism for strengthening quality, insofar as it guides the selection, promotion, and compensation of teachers and administrators based on ability, effort, and individual accomplishments. This approach is thought to enhance equity, maximize human capital productivity, reduce subjective practices such as favoritism, nepotism, or corruption, and reinforce institutional effectiveness, and, consequently, educational quality (Qizi, 2021).

The effectiveness of educational institutions is largely a function of the managerial strategies deployed by administrators and leadership teams. These strategies shape educational quality through institutional planning, the allocation of human resources, and the provision of adequate facilities for instructional purposes (Suro & Anggraeni, 2024). They also involve communication channels, pedagogical supervision, results assessment, and joint innovation efforts, among other dimensions (Azaña-Lucio et al., 2024). The institutional environment itself can act as either a positive or negative force for change: well-designed managerial strategies improve coordination, optimize resources, and foster innovation, thereby positively affecting student learning outcomes. Conversely, the absence of strategic leadership or planning rooted in institutional culture constrains school effectiveness and the broader perception of educational quality within the community (Al Faruq et al., 2024).

Internationally, schools that implement effective management practices tend to see improvements in learning outcomes, administrative operations, and overall school satisfaction. Demonstrating that these improvements depend on how management is structured and executed implies that those responsible for strategic planning, pedagogical supervision, and resource allocation play a crucial role in sustaining institutional quality (Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2022). The benefits for teaching do not materialize automatically; they depend on the existence of an institutional framework, the characteristics of the control system, and the ways in which monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are implemented. School leadership must therefore align management methods with organizational structures that can optimize school results (Phumphongkhochasorn et al., 2022).

In Latin America, however, the application of managerial strategies in basic education faces significant constraints, including institutional fragility, resource scarcity, and ineffective oversight systems. These conditions undermine principals' capacity to implement management practices and affect overall school performance, generating inequalities in educational quality (Gamboa-Suárez et al., 2022). Evidence in this area remains limited, and many assessments lack systematic follow-up or reliable data analysis that might identify replicable success mechanisms. There is thus a pressing need for deeper empirical inquiry based on robust data to inform policies and management practices that can positively impact basic education in the region (Guerra et al., 2021).

The academic literature presents divergent views on the relationship between managerial strategies and educational quality in Latin American basic education. While some studies report improvements in efficiency, planning, and school leadership, others contend that institutional constraints, particularly insufficient resources, limit the potential of such strategies. This divergence underscores the need to synthesize existing evidence in order to identify which managerial practices yield sustainable effects on learning and school performance. From this standpoint, the present study set out to analyze the impact of managerial strategies on the quality of basic education in Latin America.

Methodology

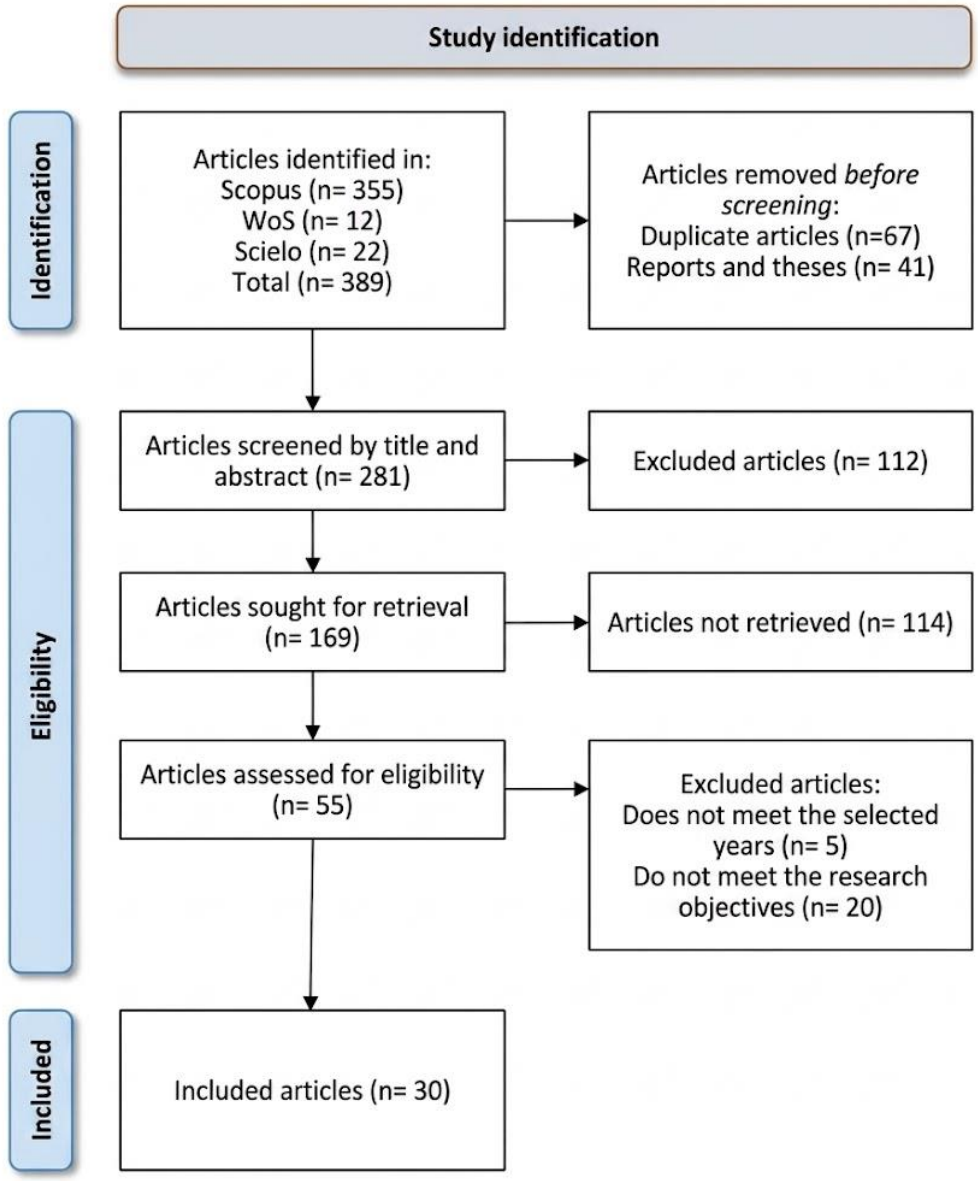
The study followed the PRISMA guidelines, which provided an essential framework for structuring the search, selection, and evaluation processes, thereby ensuring reproducibility (Page et al., 2022).

The process began with a search for studies addressing managerial strategies and their impact on educational quality in basic education institutions across Latin America. This search, conducted between July and September 2025, focused primarily on three databases: Scopus, Scielo, and Web of Science. The Boolean operator employed was: ((manage* OR "educational leadership" OR "school leadership" OR "school administration" OR "instructional leadership") AND ("educational quality" OR "quality of education" OR "school improvement" OR "academic performance" OR "student achievement" OR "school effectiveness") AND ("basic education" OR "primary education" OR "secondary education" OR "elementary education")), which helped delimit the areas relevant to the study's focus using related keywords.

Inclusion criteria stipulated that only indexed academic articles published between 2021 and 2025, available in English, Spanish, or Portuguese, and in open-access format, addressing the Latin American context within the social sciences and administration fields, would be considered. Exclusion criteria ruled out theses and dissertations, monographs, conference proceedings, books, and literature review articles.

The selection process unfolded in three stages. In the identification stage, 389 records were retrieved from the different databases. After removing 67 duplicates and 41 reports or theses, 281 records remained for screening. Titles and abstracts were reviewed, leading to the exclusion of 112 records that did not meet the initial criteria. In the retrieval stage, 169 documents were sought, but 114 could not be obtained. Subsequently, 55 full-text reports were assessed for eligibility, and 25 were excluded for not matching the selected years or the research objectives. Ultimately, 30 studies were included in the systematic review. This procedure ensured that the studies retained were relevant, accessible, and aligned with the stated objectives.

Figure 1.
PRISMA flow diagram



Results and discussion

The article selection process resulted in the inclusion of 30 scientific articles, the details of which are presented below:

Table 1
Selected articles for the systematic review

Author and year	Approach and design	Findings

Ahumada-Figueroa & Durán-Fuentes (2024), Chile	Qualitative / Case study	Distributed leadership and collaboration strengthen school management and enhance pedagogical practices.
Alfaro-Ponce et al. (2023), Mexico	Quantitative / Experimental	School management and strategic decisions improve infrastructure and educational quality.
Cabrera et al. (2025), Chile	Quantitative / Descriptive	Strengthening leadership and principal training improves school management.
Coelho et al. (2021), Brazil	Quantitative / Correlational	School infrastructure and administrative capacity determine and impact school management.
Cossul & Saraiva (2023), Brazil	Qualitative / Case study	Participatory leadership strategies, collaboration, clear communication, and defined roles sustained educational quality.
Da Silva et al. (2023), Brazil	Qualitative / Case study	A lack of planning and communication limits the implementation of educational strategies.
De Assis & Marconi (2021), Brazil	Quantitative / Empirical analysis	Leadership and school climate depend on the principal selection mechanism.
De Lucena & De Souza (2022), Brazil	Qualitative	Insufficient training and problems in principal selection affect managerial strategies.
Furlan et al. (2021), Brazil	Mixed / Correlational / Case study	The efficiency of school management—through leadership, planning, and community participation—impacts educational quality.
Gómez-Hurtado et al. (2021), Chile	Qualitative / Case study	Inclusive and collaborative leadership strengthens school management and raises educational quality.
Guedes et al. (2021), Brazil	Quantitative	School management and institutional climate affect academic performance, with leadership and planning standing out.

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Holgado-Apaza et al. (2024), Peru	Quantitative / Non-experimental	Institutional support and teacher planning impact teacher satisfaction.
Junger et al. (2023), Brazil	Mixed / Descriptive	School management related to digital technologies strengthens inclusive teaching.
Lora-Loza et al. (2022), Peru	Quantitative / Non-experimental	Teacher performance is related to educational quality, and managerial strategies improve school processes.
Maureira-Cabrera & Montecinos (2023), Chile	Mixed / Exploratory descriptive	School departments strengthen educational quality through distributed leadership, collaboration, and effective curriculum.
Maureira-Cabrera & Sanhueza (2023), Chile	Mixed	School departments strengthen pedagogical leadership, teacher collaboration, and student learning.
Maureira-Cabrera et al. (2024), Chile	Quantitative	Distributed leadership strengthens institutional culture and shared management.
Mejía et al. (2024), Colombia	Qualitative	Public policy management strengthens the family-school alliance, promotes equity and inclusion, and improves educational quality.
Ortega-Muñoz et al. (2025), Mexico	Quantitative	Directive management influences teacher performance, thereby strengthening educational quality.
Pino-Yancovic & Ahumada (2022), Chile	Qualitative	Collaborative inquiry strengthens distributed leadership, network learning, and data analysis.
Povedano et al. (2021), Brazil	Quantitative	Educational efficiency depends on pedagogical and management factors; principals' skills are key to improving quality.
Questa-Torterolo & Tejera (2024), Uruguay	Quantitative	School management facilitates educational transformation, improving quality and inclusion.

Rodríguez et al. (2020), Mexico	Qualitative / Case study	Social justice leadership promotes inclusion, equity, and teacher cohesion.
Salvo-Garrido et al. (2025), Chile	Qualitative / Non-experimental	Teacher resilience improves performance, student well-being, and contributes to effective school management.
Sánchez et al. (2022), Colombia	Qualitative / Case study	Educational inclusion strengthens diverse communities and improves educational quality.
Soares & Dos Santos (2024), Brazil	Quantitative / Non-experimental	Managerial strategies strengthen educational quality and serve as an institutional model.
Sobrinha & Fernandes (2025), Brazil	Quantitative / Non-experimental	Effective management of infrastructure, resources, and teacher training improves student performance and educational quality.
Uemura & Comini (2022), Brazil	Qualitative / Descriptive	School performance improves with participatory leadership, shared management, motivation, family participation, continuous evaluation, and teacher training.
Vargas & Heis (2023), Brazil	Qualitative / Case study	Organized technology and school management improved family communication, strengthening educational quality.
Zamora et al. (2023), Chile	Qualitative / Case study	Distributed leadership strengthens school management and improves educational quality.

Regarding the results, 30 articles were included in the systematic review, meeting the previously established selection criteria. In total, 18 came from Scopus, 8 from Web of Science, and 4 from Scielo. The strong reliance on Scopus and Web of Science confers high visibility and academic rigor on the findings. At the same time, the inclusion of Scielo ensures a balanced regional perspective, which is crucial for validating the applicability of managerial strategies within the Latin American context.

By country, 13 articles pertained to Brazil, 2 to Peru, 9 to Chile, 2 to Colombia, 3 to Mexico, and 1 to Uruguay, allowing for relevant comparisons across the Latin American landscape. The marked concentration of research in Brazil and Chile establishes a key comparative axis for the review. This makes it possible to contrast Chilean management strategies, which tend to emphasize distributed leadership, with Brazilian models, which often focus on infrastructure challenges and spending efficiency. The lower representation of countries such as Peru or Colombia points to potential research gaps that future studies should address.

In terms of publication year, 4 studies were published in 2025, 6 in 2024, 9 in 2023, 5 in 2022, and 6 in 2021. The vast majority of studies appeared in the last triennium (2023–2025), ensuring the timeliness and relevance of the conclusions on school management. This temporal proximity allows the review to incorporate recent strategies, including post-pandemic managerial adaptations.

Regarding methodology, 13 studies adopted a quantitative approach, 13 a qualitative perspective, and only 6 used a mixed-methods design. The balance between quantitative and qualitative studies is a strength of this review. This distribution facilitates both the identification of patterns linking management to outcomes and a deeper understanding of how the impact mechanisms of these strategies operate.

The analysis shows that distributed leadership emerges as a key management approach, perceived favorably by both administrators and teachers in promoting continuous improvement (Maureira-Cabrera et al., 2024; Cabrera et al., 2025). This form of management is reinforced by professionalized direction and organizational redesign to build a solid management team (Zamora et al., 2023). Evidence from Chile indicates that internal structures such as school departments serve as highly effective mechanisms for distributing pedagogical leadership and fostering teamwork (Maureira-Cabrera & Montecinos, 2023; Maureira-Cabrera & Sanhueza, 2023). Additionally, tools like collaborative inquiry have proven valuable in mobilizing teaching teams around joint improvement actions that affect pedagogical processes (Pino-Yancovic & Ahumada, 2022).

The management of working conditions is equally vital for human capital. Institutional support and a positive school climate favor teacher resilience (Salvo-Garrido et al., 2025), which in turn correlates positively with well-being and performance (Holgado-Apaza et al., 2024; Lora-Loza et al., 2022). However, the success of strategic planning is not always matched by institutional strengthening in Brazil, where principals' work has been found to be fragmented, with operational tasks occupying more time than strategic ones (Da Silva et al., 2023). This ineffectiveness is linked to a disconnect between principal training and actual needs (De Lucena & De Souza, 2022) and to selection processes that affect leadership quality and school climate (De Assis & Marconi, 2021).

Management must also address equity and inclusion. Principals operating in vulnerable settings often adopt a social justice leadership approach (Rodríguez et al., 2020), which fosters collaborative cultures that recognize diversity (Gómez-Hurtado et al., 2021; Sánchez et al., 2022). The management of public policies, particularly those centered on family education (Mejía et al., 2024), enables the implementation of equity-oriented measures. With respect to material resources, while infrastructure is an influential factor (Sobrinha & Fernandes, 2025), its impact depends on local administrative capacity (Coelho et al., 2021), as resource implementation falters when management is weak. Studies such as those by Furlan et al. (2021) and Soares & Dos Santos (2024) concluded that managerial efficiency, rather than socioeconomic status or investment levels, explains the success of institutions in vulnerable situations, reinforcing the notion that management matters more than resources per se, as also noted by Guedes et al. (2021) and Povedano et al. (2021). Technology management (Junger et al., 2023) is also relevant, though it requires strategic public policy decisions to overcome infrastructure challenges (Alfaro-Ponce et al., 2023). Managerial organization (Vargas & Heis, 2023) and community participation (Questa-Torterolo & Tejera, 2024) contribute to educational quality even in crisis situations (Cossul & Saraiva, 2023).

Conclusions

The evidence supports the assertion that the effectiveness of managerial strategies significantly impacts educational quality in Latin American basic education, particularly in vulnerable contexts, where this impact may outweigh that of socioeconomic factors. Distributed leadership, both conventional and strategically formal, stands out as a central axis that strengthens institutional culture and promotes continuous improvement. Instruments such as collaborative inquiry and school department organization prove effective in professionalizing management and enhancing collaborative teaching work, thereby improving curriculum delivery and learning outcomes.

Human capital management is equally decisive: institutional support and a favorable organizational climate foster teacher resilience and satisfaction, both directly linked to performance. Nevertheless, systemic weaknesses persist. A lack of managerial planning, continuing education programs disconnected from real needs, and deficiencies in principal selection limit the implementation of transformative strategies. Furthermore, the impact of material and technological resources depends heavily on local administrative capacity. In sum, educational improvement requires inclusive and adaptive leadership capable of mobilizing communities and optimizing resources to ensure quality, sustainability, and equity.

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