



Educational Management in Language Centers with Quality and Equity in Globalized Contexts

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700909>

Received: 29 July 2026; Accepted: 03 August 2026; Published: 15 August 2026

ABSTRACT

The globalized era presents a set of challenges that the state and its citizens must address in order to achieve inclusion, sustainability, development, and progress in the various areas that make up daily life, particularly from the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018). Consequently, new knowledge is needed to provide the set of competencies required to manage language centers or schools, with lifelong education serving as one of the fundamental elements for achieving this goal. Thus, this article reflects on the relevance of Arnoux and Bein's (2015) educational management and language policy in ensuring quality and equitable educational services for schools and foreign language centers where language managers play a significant role. In turn, it highlights the role of the director or coordinator as a manager in language education through their comprehensive actions in this context. Finally, it acknowledges the need to move beyond innovative, economic, and administrative perspectives regarding educational management in language education and its stakeholders, and to address the systemic and complex role of an educational institution and its operations.

Keywords: Educational administration; language policy; globalization; quality; equity; education.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and related processes have brought resulted in a variety of ongoing changes in people's daily lives. In particular, globalization is viewed as the massive convergence of diverse spaces at the local, national and international levels (Castro and Jessup, 2022). These shifts in the ways people behave, feel, interact and perceive reality, in turn, create educational challenges at both the community and individual levels. Consequently, it is necessary to design and strengthen the mechanisms that enable individuals to address every situation, whether in their immediate or broader context, in a way that fosters active, participatory, flexible and transformative engagement, with human development being essential in order to achieving this goal.

Education achieves a leading role as a means of human development (Daros, 2010), particularly when considering the points outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018), regarding the need to achieve quality of life, equity of opportunity in diverse contexts, cultural and identity revitalization and holistic human development, among other goals, which from this perspective, take on meaning, form and a direction for development.

This is because the educational system, language instruction and the administration of foreign language schools are recognized as guarantees of the skills and knowledge necessary to function in both immediate and broader contexts where individuals interact and respond to the phenomena they encounter there, making them dynamic and adaptable realities. Furthermore, it is crucial to view educational management as essential to achieving quality and equitable education, as well as language teaching as a mechanism linked to policy

orientations or decisions that go hand in hand with the construction of identities (Arnoux and Bein, 2015, p. 15).

However, contrary to an economistic focus on results, educational management is approached from a holistic perspective that considers its work through a transdisciplinary lens, conceptualizing the latter as an integration of different fields of knowledge (Castro, 2025). This lends systemic significance to the educational management of a foreign language school, implying that its role must be shaped holistically, as well as through the specific details of each of its constituent dimensions and the systemic relationships that can be established.

Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize a thorough understanding of the management of foreign language schools and centers, as well as competent human resources; an intensive mastery of the educational linguistics of the languages being taught and the ability to independently develop innovative frameworks for the design of language policies that are coherent and consistent with Latin American contexts (Colombia and Mexico) within the school system.

This article presents a reflection on the relevance of education in the current political and social context; emphasizing educational quality as a comprehensive educational system that incorporates cultural, socio-historical and contextual elements into the management of the educational system, specifically in foreign language schools. While equity is defined as educating in and for diversity, its preservation and appreciation. Consequently, the role of the school administrator as an educational manager is emphasized, and a transformation of their work is proposed toward an approach that considers the functioning of the educational institution through the complex, systemic and transdisciplinary integration of each of its constituent dimensions.

Complexity is understood here as that which allows us to move beyond a segmented view of reality and fosters the integration of knowledge, forms and means to achieve broad, specialized, and comprehensive understanding (Pereira, 2011). Meanwhile, the systemic approach is an integrative method that encourages viewing the cosmos as a reality that is composed by diverse systems, in which each system fulfills a specific function and enables the cosmos to function not as the sum of its parts, but as a distinct, multidimensional entity (Nieto, 2013). Finally, transdisciplinarity is viewed as the possibility of blurring established boundaries between fields and areas of knowledge in order to construct a complex and systemic understanding of the universe (Castro, 2025).

Education and Globalization

Currently, as language school administration evolves, a variety of factors and aspects make it a complex reality; among these, the issues of globalization and interculturalism stand out. This phenomenon has influenced people's daily lives across various spheres and levels of activity (Castro and Jessup, 2022; Castro, 2025).

That being stated, globalization has given rise to new ways of being, existing, living, feeling, and interacting that bring about significant changes in the daily lives of individuals and society as a whole, in particular when we consider that among its effects are new dynamics in the construction of knowledge due to technological, cognitive and communicative advances, new interactions between communities, exchange of information, new spaces for encounters and the requirements it establishes regarding the type of knowledge needed to understand reality.

Cárdenas (2018) and Barria (2021) refer to today's society as the knowledge society. That is, a society in which information circulates and is freely accessible to everyone; a situation that is increasingly driven by the effects of mass media, cultural exchange, market liberalization, scientific and technological innovation, and the internet, among other factors, giving citizens the role of "prosumers" (Toffler, 1998; González, 2021). This is a person who plays a dual role within society: on the one hand, they are a recipient of all information that exists in their immediate and broader surroundings, and on the other, they become a manager and participant in said content.

It is there that education plays a fundamental role for citizens, especially when considering the views of Benavides and Tovar (2017), Olín (2018), and Castro and Toledo Sarracino (2024), who see it as a means of responding to the challenges posed by specific circumstances of time and space. Similarly, from the perspective of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018), education is considered one of the fundamental elements for improving people's quality of life. In other words, the responsibility rests on the shoulders of the various educational systems to prepare students with all the optimal and timely knowledge, abilities, skills, and competencies so that they can function effectively; this has direct effects on individuals' daily lives in terms of epistemological, cultural, philosophical, and economic aspects, among others.

Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the educational system in such a way as to strengthen both its educational process and its outcomes, recognizing that the educational sphere is not a static reality (Osorio and Rubio, 2007); which requires reflection, innovation, monitoring, strategic direction, and feedback within a continuous cycle of action, so as to generate changes in pedagogical, didactic, and educational practices that are in line with the characteristics of the time and space in which it is embedded.

Thus, it is believed that, given the particularities of the current era, one of the main imbalances to be addressed in the educational process is moving beyond rote-memorization methods of "banking" education (Freire, 1970). This approach is viewed as a traditional and conventional form of education that transmits isolated, decontextualized, and hegemonic content. The goal is to foster a transdisciplinary view of reality that contributes to complex and divergent systemic thinking (Castro, 2025). Consequently, language school management emerges as a key factor in achieving this objective, while also approaching educational administration from a comprehensive, cooperative and interactive perspective.

Educational Management in Language Schools and Its Role Within an Education System of Quality and Equitable

According to Flores (2021), educational management is recognized as playing a structuring role within the educational institution. However, this work is not limited to administrative tasks, but rather it encompasses strategic, methodological and didactic perspectives. Therefore, it is argued that educational management focused on foreign language schools lays the groundwork for each area, department and individual to act, evaluate, provide feedback, innovate and continuously refine their practices through strategic direction and alignment all grounded in teamwork. It also contributes to the design of language policies for the implementation of foreign language programs, while upholding the principles of internationalization, holistic education and lifelong learning.

Alonso and Fernández (2013) view management as a transdisciplinary act, a process that involves communication and teamwork across various fields of knowledge (Castro, 2025). They therefore argue that, from the perspective of educational management, the educational process and everything related to it cannot be described in a minimalist manner, much less in an all-encompassing way. Consequently, a systemic reality (Sols, 2023) emerges, which describes educational management in foreign language schools. This is a perspective that recognizes the functioning of the educational institution not as the sum of its parts, but as the integration of these parts, both individually, with specific characteristics and functions, and in terms of how they work together.

For this reason, among the goals that educational management should aim for is the promotion of educational quality and equity, which is of vital importance to what is established in the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2018) regarding the eradication of poverty, quality education, decent work, economic growth, gender equality, peace, justice, and the reduction of inequalities, among other goals that seek to dignify and improve life; therefore, the activities carried out within educational administration must embrace this responsibility and implement measures to achieve these objectives.

That said, it is crucial to highlight that, despite the considerable polysemy surrounding the concept of educational quality, we endorse the position of Castro and Londoño (2023), who define it as the ability to provide a timely, appropriate, and high-impact educational service to the educational community. This

reinforces the public policy on language center management outlined by the Ministry of National Education (2008; 2019) in Colombia and the Secretariat of Public Education (2026) in Mexico, government agencies that view educational quality as a learning process that addresses all linguistic, cultural, social, political, and environmental contexts and is constantly being improved to that end.

Therefore, far from approaches focused solely on language learning outcomes, educational quality is recognized as a form of education that is evaluated with the aim of achieving quality and equity. This encompasses everything from the management of language schools, physical spaces included, to new trends in foreign language teaching, innovative pedagogies, curricula, teaching methods, and educational approaches developed there, taking into account the specific elements and needs of the context in which they operate and the well-being of all members of the educational community.

At the same time, it is established that educational equity does not mean equal treatment (Castañeda and Suarez, 2018). Rather, it refers to the appreciation of diversity (UNESCO, 2003). It is an education that seeks to preserve identity, culture, difference, and the characteristics that make each person unique, promoting access to a quality education for everyone, without discrimination or exclusion. This requires critical thinking (Beech, 2008), as well as constant reflection on educational practice and related issues (Skliar & Duschatzky, 2000).

That said, the great challenge of equitable education is to achieve a quality of education that responds from, for, and within diversity, not relegating it as a problem to be solved, but recognizing it as a reality with a wide variety of educational potentials and opportunities that must be addressed on its specific characteristics in order to achieve the greatest possible educational benefits. This sets a highly demanding goal for educational leadership, which must ensure this through every action and process it undertakes, with the school principal, as an educational leader and serving as a key actor.

The Administrators' Role as an Educational Leader in the Context of Educational Quality and Equity

Based on what has been discussed so far, it is clear that leadership plays an active, dynamic and flexible role in educational management (Padilla & Vargas, 2022). This is particularly evident when considering the challenges and demands that the current context places on the education system, including the pursuit of quality and equitable education, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2018). This highlights the impact of a leader's actions on the outcomes and the quality and equity of an educational institution's operations.

Based on the foregoing, authors such as Restrepo and Restrepo (2012) argue that among the main characteristics of a school administrator are: being a well-rounded leader, refraining from authoritarian behavior, and possessing the competencies, abilities and skills to integrate diverse pedagogical, administrative and regulatory knowledge into their actions and the operation of the educational institution by promoting ethical and transparent teamwork. This is why Goleman (2014) proposes that they must possess a conceptual framework that includes regulatory aspects (Ministry of National Education and Entrepreneurs for Education Foundation, 2022), in addition to establishing themselves as a transformative leader (Manríquez & Reyes, 2022).

In summary, an educational leader who seeks to act from a perspective of educational management is considered someone with a broad range of knowledge: pedagogical, didactic, administrative, methodological and pragmatic models, trends, and paradigms. All of this knowledge that enables them to foster processes of educational innovation, as well as to lead curriculum management, ongoing professional development, comprehensive education focused on quality and equity, integration with the local context and to promote the well-being of the entire educational community. Following Calatayud's (2010) principles and the points discussed above, the role of the administrator as an educational manager is identified as essential to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, the school climate, social harmony, interpersonal relationships, institutional coherence, local, regional, and national development, and the transformation of education and the environment in which it is embedded.

Finally, evaluation stands out as a key aspect of educational management, which includes design, organization, direction, and control (Corrales & Arturo, 2023). It is important to emphasize that this evaluation process is essential for identifying emerging educational needs and their possible solutions, which would lead to a new cycle of assessment, design, organization, management, and monitoring, thus establishing a cyclical and ongoing process aimed at providing the best educational service to the entire educational community, ranging from curriculum management processes (Morales et al., 2017; Flores, 2021), to matters related to the interaction with the environment, the contextualization of educational processes, administration, and the procurement of resources, among other dimensions and actions that contribute to the efficient, contextual and up-to-date functioning of the educational institution.

CONCLUSIONS

Within the framework of UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (2018) and Arnoux & Bein' approach, education is recognized as an essential tool for development and the quality of human life. It is therefore essential to consider the effects of factors such as globalization and related phenomena, including scientific and technological advances, the exchange and mass production of information, international media, and intercultural encounters, among others. These factors present new educational challenges and, in turn, require the development of competencies, knowledge, abilities and skills so that individuals can function actively and productively in both their immediate and broader environments.

It is there that quality and equity in education take on a privileged role within the educational systems in Colombian and Mexican contexts, particularly when considering how to improve the management of foreign-language schools, where educational quality is defined as an education imbued by constant evaluation and innovation in pursuit of the best educational service. The educational management is recognized as a comprehensive endeavor, not merely limited to specific administrative or academic objectives and goals but rather as a complex and systemic reality: that is, a web of interrelationships among the various dimensions that constitute the functioning of an educational institution, both individually and collectively. Consequently, the role of a teacher-administrator as an educational manager becomes essential in managing a high-quality and equitable education system and in designing national language policies.

However, in this descriptive study, the experiences and practices of language education managers across different institutional contexts were not presented. But, it is important to mention that case studies, interviews, or surveys involving directors, coordinators, teachers, and learners could provide deeper insights into effective management strategies and challenges in further studies. In a short run, for academic purposes there will be a development of competency frameworks for language managers would also enhance the practical contribution of the work by identifying the knowledge, skills, and leadership capacities required in contemporary language education settings.

To conclude, it is considered that the roles of administrators and teachers in foreign language schools should be viewed within the broader context of the entire educational system; they should not focus solely on administrative matters but should also ensure continuous innovation in the educational process of applied linguistics in foreign language teaching and all related aspects. Consequently, the various processes that must be carried out: design, organization, monitoring and evaluation, are recognized as a cyclical and ongoing process. The result of this process is the redefinition of the educational system a a good language policy regarding teacher development and language teaching in so that it is flexible, contextual, active and inclusive, with evaluation playing a fundamental role, not as a punitive measure, but as a tool for reflection, self-awareness, and development.

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