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# Management of Educational Projects to Optimize Institutional Processes in the Academic Domain

## Gestión de proyectos educativos para optimizar los procesos institucionales en la dimensión académica

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### Abstract

The management of educational projects at the Soacha Avanza Educational Institution addresses the need to transform institutional processes in the academic sphere; the problem stems from gaps in access, retention, and educational relevance within a context of high vulnerability. The central objective is to establish an effective academic management model. To this end, a mixed-methods approach is employed that integrates document analysis, interviews, focus groups, and direct observation. The methodology relies on triangulation to understand the educational system as a living, ever-changing organism. The results reveal the importance of connecting pedagogical management with institutional culture and continuous improvement; tensions are identified between what is planned and what is implemented, and pathways emerge for consolidating an evaluative and collaborative culture. The conclusion argues that institutional change depends on the collective adoption of flexible models capable of adapting and reinventing themselves amid the constraints and challenges of public education. Thus, academic management emerges as a driver of transformation and a possible model for other schools seeking paths to quality.

**Keywords:** educational management, quality of education, pedagogical innovation, educational leadership, institutional development

## Resumen

La gestión de proyectos educativos en la Institución Educativa Soacha Avanza La Unidad responde a la necesidad de transformar los procesos institucionales en el ámbito académico, la problemática se origina en las brechas presentes en el acceso, la permanencia y la pertinencia escolar en un contexto de alta vulnerabilidad, el objetivo central se dirige a establecer un modelo de gestión académica eficaz, para esto, se articula un enfoque mixto que integra análisis documental, entrevistas, grupos focales y observación directa, la metodología apuesta por la triangulación para entender el sistema educativo como un organismo vivo y mutable, los resultados revelan la importancia de conectar la gestión pedagógica con la cultura institucional y la mejora continua, se identifican tensiones entre lo planeado y lo ejecutado, emergen rutas para la consolidación de una cultura evaluativa y colaborativa, la conclusión sostiene que el cambio institucional depende de la apropiación colectiva de modelos flexibles, capaces de adaptarse y reinventarse en medio de las restricciones y desafíos de la educación pública, así, la gestión académica se perfila como un motor de transformación y horizonte posible para otras escuelas que buscan caminos de calidad.

**Palabras clave:** gestión educativa, calidad de la educación, innovación pedagógica, liderazgo educativo, desarrollo institucional

## Introduction

The institutional analysis revealed a significant gap between what was planned and what was implemented in the academic management of the Soacha Avanza La Unidad Educational Institution. The 2023 internal self-assessment identified gaps in school processes and revealed that participation by the educational community was low; in particular, institutional dynamics were affected by social vulnerability, a lack of resources, and the diversity of the student population (MEN, 2020). What mattered was not merely the existence of plans or models, but rather the stakeholders' ownership of them. In a sense, the study highlighted that evaluation and monitoring systems failed to effectively contribute to continuous improvement, according to Pimienta et al. (2018).

Educational problems do not always arise from a new situation but rather become entrenched when a lack of intervention perpetuates existing gaps. It is worth noting that, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2005), school management required questions focused on actual practices rather than merely on regulations. The urgency of strengthening management and evaluation processes became evident in the information gathered from teachers, administrators, and families

The rationale was based on the recognition of a school context characterized by high absenteeism rates, low family and student participation, and a social environment marked by unemployment and informality (institutional profile, 2023), the proposal to optimize academic management was grounded in the need to guarantee the right to quality, equitable, and relevant education, as established by UNESCO (2010, 2021); the school undertook the task of diversifying its educational offerings by integrating environmental, technological, and artistic components.

The “inter-structuring pedagogical model based on a dialogic approach” emerged in response to demands for inclusion and holistic education. The contextual analysis aligned with UNESCO’s (2005) position that educational quality depends not only on coverage but also on the institutional capacity to respond to environmental challenges. Management was justified by the urgency of establishing mechanisms for self-evaluation and continuous improvement (MEN, 2018); the lack of clear life plans and students’ low self-esteem reinforced the importance of a holistic approach; it became evident that improvements in management could positively impact educational processes and student retention

A review of the international literature revealed that proposals such as the “Academic Management Iceberg” model in Panama (Ríos, 2021) emphasized management as a pathway for reflection and institutional improvement; school climate was recognized as a predictor of effectiveness, as demonstrated by Ozgenel (2020) in Turkey; the use of organizational climate scales and relational research methods contributed relevant insights to the local study; Romero’s (2019) dissertation in Peru underscored the importance of a curriculum centered on scientific competencies and the use of participatory strategies; in Colombia, studies such as those by Sánchez and Lache (2017) and Vargas et al. (2022) agreed that pedagogical management and teacher leadership were key drivers of transformation; what mattered was not only the existence of guidelines and directives, but also their contextual adaptation and the active leadership of school teams. In this regard, national educational management responded both to the Ministry of Education’s (MEN) public policies and to the reality of each institution; the analysis of the background information revealed that the effectiveness of management depended on the integration of curriculum, institutional culture, and monitoring practices (MEN, 2008)

The conceptual framework was constructed based on total quality approaches, continuous improvement models, and theories of pedagogical leadership. In line with Bolívar (2006), Santos Guerra (2014), and Murillo (2011), academic management was

understood as the system that integrates pedagogical design, teaching practices, classroom management, assessment, academic monitoring, and institutional culture; Each construct was operationalized in the study. Pedagogical design, according to Stenhouse (1987) and MEN (2016), focused on curricular organization and the articulation of content and methodologies; pedagogical practices were analyzed as the point of implementation of the curriculum and teacher mediation (Goodson, 2014; Imbernón, 2007).

Classroom management was addressed in terms of inclusive and adaptive environments, drawing on Evertson and Weinstein (2012); assessment, in line with Black and Wiliam (2009) and Shepard (2000), was viewed as a comprehensive and feedback-driven process; academic monitoring was defined as a systematic action to anticipate risks and guide intervention (Tinto, 1997; MEN, 2021); institutional culture, as conceptualized by Fullan (2007) and Bolívar (2016), formed the basis for the adoption of change; continuous improvement was structured based on Deming's (1986) PDCA cycle and MEN Guideline 34 (2008); international and national literature provided the foundation for interpreting results and formulating recommendations; in summary, the study showed that academic management did not depend on isolated actions but rather on genuine and sustained coordination among the various components of the school system.

Furthermore, in recent reflections on academic management, it has become evident that effective coordination between school management, educational quality, efficiency, and effectiveness remains an unresolved challenge in many institutional contexts. Fernando Augusto and Quintero Ortiz (2023) analyzed academic management at a public school in Antioquia through a hermeneutic review, finding that, although the conceptual categories are widely recognized in the literature, a lack of cohesion persists in institutional practice, especially at the elementary and middle school levels, where academic management is often reduced to mere organization and lacks strategic coordination with institutional improvement. Their analysis underscores the need to consolidate integrative models that allow for overcoming conceptual and operational barriers to move toward scenarios of sustained quality.

Along these lines, Ramos and Vásquez (2023) propose that ensuring educational quality is only possible if effective and context-specific academic management models are established, built upon the identification and analysis of the institutional, regulatory, and social determinants. Their systematic review, applied to the Talita "Cumi" School, demonstrates that pedagogical innovation and continuous

improvement require a deep understanding of institutional contexts and the implementation of flexible models capable of responding to the unique dynamics of each educational context. The authors also highlight the importance of grounding management in a solid conceptual and legal framework that guides collective work and promotes the active participation of all school stakeholders.

For his part, Sánchez Prias (2022) emphasizes the role of a culture of academic quality as a central strategy in academic and administrative management, especially in rural contexts. His case study in Tolima reveals that the consolidation of self-assessment and improvement processes—guided by tools such as the Ministry of Education's (MEN) Guide 34—enables the structuring of administrative and teaching practices oriented toward continuous improvement. However, he cautions that the sustainability of these practices depends on the effective integration of the various components of management and the collective adoption of an organizational culture that values institutional learning and self-regulation as cornerstones of educational development.

These recent contributions reinforce the premise that academic management cannot be understood as a sum of isolated actions, but rather as an interconnected system where conceptual cohesion, contextual relevance, and institutional culture act as fundamental drivers for educational improvement and innovation.

## Methodology

The study adopted an evaluative approach; the research was guided by a mixed-methods paradigm, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods in each phase. This choice was not arbitrary; the context demanded a broad perspective, and the evaluative nature of the study allowed for the analysis of processes, the assessment of practices, and the identification of gaps. The results were compelling; though at times ambiguous. The parameters of MEN Guideline 34 served as a reference, yes, but also as a constraint. The comparison was made in relation to national standards, never to external models. The methodological decision was justified, to a certain extent, by the need for the findings to be transferable. Educational management demands rigor, but also flexibility. Flexibility was evident in the choice of the unit of analysis; the case study was the approach selected—one case, one institution, multiple stakeholders

The logic of methodological integration was based on the triangulation of sources; triangulation was a constant, never a whim. The aim was to contrast quantitative data with qualitative perceptions; what mattered was not just measuring, but understanding—understanding the processes, understanding the resistance, understanding management within its context. Quantitative instruments provided robustness, while qualitative techniques added depth. On balance, management was not explained through a single lens; it was analyzed from both structural and experiential perspectives. Management was analyzed, but it was also evaluated.

It is worth noting that the transfer of results was not immediate; the transfer required contextual validation. Evaluative management was not limited to comparing data; evaluative management involved interpretation—interpretation of trends, interpretation of gaps, and interpretation of patterns. The case study allowed, in a sense, for observing management in action; it was more than a methodological snapshot; it was a strategy for capturing institutional complexity.

The mixed-methods approach took the form of the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data; quantitative data were collected using scales, forms, and matrices, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. Triangulation was key—time and again—triangulation of instruments, triangulation of actors, and triangulation of moments; what was relevant was not just the instrument itself, but the cross-referencing—the cross-referencing of sources, the cross-referencing of perspectives. To a certain extent, this cross-referencing allowed us to discover patterns—patterns that are not revealed on a single level; management, in this context, always revealed more than one facet.

Explanatory logic guided the interpretation; the interpretation sought to go beyond immediate results, beyond the data. The explanation was based on comparison—comparison between what was planned and what was implemented, between norms and practice, and between formal management and lived management. What mattered was not just the record, but the understanding of the process—a process that, at times, moved forward and, at others, stagnated

An integrative approach—yes, an integrative approach—because educational management does not allow for partial views; systemic analysis became essential; management was broken down into dimensions, which were then integrated; management was observed sequentially but also as a whole; the results, at times, showed coherence, and at other times, contradiction; that contradiction was considered input for the analysis, never an obstacle

Data collection was based on instruments adapted to institutional management criteria; characterization forms, self-assessment matrices, and rating scales were used. Quantitative instruments made it possible to systematize data on practices and progress—systematization, but also differentiation: differentiation of strengths and differentiation of opportunities. Quantitative data revealed trends, but trends alone did not explain management; trends required context.

Semi-structured interviews provided narratives; these narratives added nuances; these nuances made it possible to capture tensions; in some cases, the interviews repeated themes; this repetition was an indication—an indication of collective concern; focus groups validated findings—not only results but also meanings; participant observation allowed us to see the invisible—behavioral patterns not recorded in documents; observation was key; it made the management culture visible.

It should be noted that the use of combined research methods was not merely for redundancy; redundancy, in this context, was a strategy—a strategy to identify commonalities, to detect silences, and to confirm patterns. What mattered was not only what was said but also what was omitted; educational management was revealed through both data and discourse.

The research process proceeded in five phases, each with its own logic and justification. The first phase was documentary: an exhaustive review, literature analysis, and initial assessment. The literature did not provide all the answers but offered guidance; the documentary review defined the starting point, and the initial assessment revealed critical areas as well as strengths.

The second phase was quantitative, involving the application of instruments, the evaluation of processes, and the identification of patterns. The third phase was qualitative, consisting of interviews, focus groups, and observation. Triangulation emerged here; it integrated data, corrected biases, and strengthened findings. What was relevant was not just the method, but the combination of methods.

The fourth phase prioritized validation and multivariate analysis; expert judgment was decisive. The experts not only validated but also challenged the findings. Multivariate analysis—including PCA—allowed us to visualize correlations. The fifth phase involved modeling results, creating relational diagrams, and projecting improvement pathways; the process did not end with the data but continued with the proposal.

Instrument validation was conducted through expert judgment; validation was not automatic but involved adjustments. Experts assessed relevance and suggested changes; the instruments were adjusted before being applied. Contextual appropriateness was a prerequisite, and validation sought to ensure relevance.

Methodological triangulation was the core of credibility: triangulation of sources, triangulation of techniques, and triangulation of actors. Consistencies strengthened findings; inconsistencies forced a reevaluation of interpretations; biases were identified and corrected; what mattered was not only confirmation but also questioning

Constant review of records, continuous feedback from participants, and comparison with national and international standards consolidated validity and reliability; the conclusions were context-specific, and the recommendations were tailored to the institutional reality; validation, in this case, was a process, never a mere formality

Ethical management was the guiding principle; participants took part with informed consent, guaranteed confidentiality, and respected autonomy. The ethical protocol was validated by the institutional committee; data protection was a priority, guided by Law 1581 of 2012. There was no coercion, no manipulation, and participation was voluntary.

It is worth noting that transparency characterized the process—transparency in communication and transparency in reporting results. Ethical management was not merely a formality; ethics structured the relationship with the community. Respect for the diversity of voices was a prerequisite, and the reporting of findings back to the institution was a systematic practice. Ethical commitment was evident in the willingness to share, in openness to dialogue, and in the co-construction of meanings; ethics, in this context, was more than a requirement—it was a management practice: ethical management and participatory management.

## Results

Table 1.

*Models identified based on the variables*

| Axis                            | Findings                                                               | Challenges/Opportunities                                       |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Institutional Model</b>      | Documentary and stakeholder triangulation.                             | Contextual alignment; avoiding superficial diagnosis.          |
| <b>Pedagogical Relationship</b> | Management viewed as a network, not a linear process.                  | Requires genuine coordination and a collaborative culture.     |
| <b>Management Tools</b>         | Emerging use of the Balanced Scorecard.                                | Formalization of indicators and effective monitoring.          |
| <b>Academic Planning</b>        | Structured curriculum, but not very up-to-date.                        | The need for ongoing contextual review.                        |
| <b>Teacher Ownership</b>        | Planning shifting from individual to collective approaches.            | Inequality in ownership—an opportunity to strengthen the team. |
| <b>Assessment and Data</b>      | Assessments are rarely used to adjust the curriculum.                  | Establish a data-driven culture for decision-making.           |
| <b>Inclusion and Equity</b>     | Support is scattered; there is inequality among campuses and students. | Systematize support measures; close gaps.                      |
| <b>Participation</b>            | Regulatory bodies, little room for pedagogical reflection.             | Foster spaces for dialogue and collective improvement.         |

It is worth noting that the analysis of the institutional model was based on a triangulation of documents, specialized literature, and interviews with key stakeholders; to a certain extent, this procedure made it possible to reconstruct the development of academic administration from its origins to the current conditions; in a way, the systematic review of the literature and comparison with international benchmarks highlighted the need to contextualize models and avoid mechanical transplants; thus, the institutional characterization was not limited to formal aspects but addressed the actual processes involved in administration.

Regarding the pedagogical relationship, it could be said that management was conceived as a network of interdependent relationships among classroom practices, academic monitoring, time management, and organizational culture. It is worth noting that the network perspective allowed us to identify a lack of coordination and the need to strengthen a culture of collaboration. To some extent, the fragmentation of processes revealed obstacles to coordination among the various dimensions of educational management.

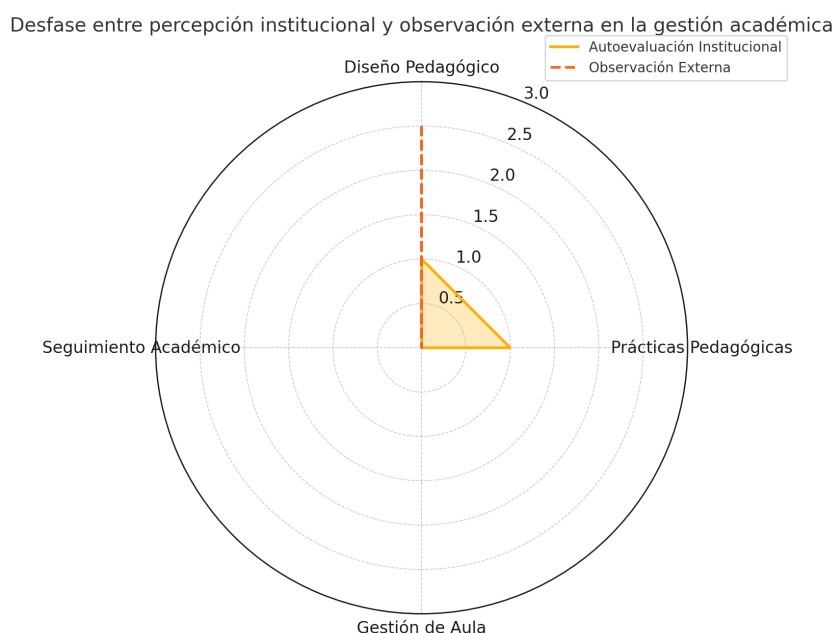
Regarding the use of management tools, an incipient implementation of the Balanced Scorecard was observed. To a certain extent, this resource facilitated the organization and monitoring of processes, although its impact depended on the teaching team's adoption of it. It should be noted that the formalization of indicators represented progress, but the effective use of data was limited by the absence of an institutional culture of systematization and analysis.

Regarding academic planning and teacher ownership, it could be said that the existence of a structured curriculum laid the foundation for pedagogical work; however, the updating and relevance of the curriculum lagged behind contextual needs. To some extent, the transition from individual planning to collective pathways revealed inequalities in faculty buy-in; it is worth noting that this situation created opportunities to strengthen teamwork and joint reflection.

Finally, regarding assessment, inclusion, and participation, it was found that institutional evaluations and monitoring mechanisms were not used systematically to provide feedback on the curriculum or to guide adjustments. To some extent, the scattered nature of support and the disparities among campuses underscored the urgency of systematizing strategies and closing gaps; It is worth noting that opportunities for institutional participation remained largely regulatory in nature, leaving the creation of spaces for pedagogical dialogue and collective improvement unaddressed.

**Figure 1.**

## Discrepancy Between Institutional Perception



The illustration clearly shows the gap between institutional self-assessment and external evaluation of the components of academic management; each axis represents a fundamental process within the school's structure, demonstrating how internal recognition tends to be minimal, merely acknowledging the formal existence of the evaluated elements, whereas observations by external agents identify partial progress or incipient adoption in pedagogical design, revealing the presence of dynamics that go beyond the institution's self-perception.

The graph shows, in the case of pedagogical design, a significant difference between what the institution reports and what the research confirms; in this component, external evaluators recognize a higher level of adoption in aspects such as the curriculum and the school day, which indicates that there are practices not recorded in the self-assessment and that the external perspective makes it possible to highlight processes in development; thus, the illustration underscores the importance of incorporating different perspectives in the assessment of educational processes, promoting a dialogue between self-assessment and external evaluation.

In the components of teaching practices, classroom management, and academic monitoring, the illustration reveals the absence of systematic records in both institutional documentation and external observations; this information gap prevents a clear identification of the level of adoption of these practices, limiting evidence-based decision-making and hindering the consolidation of continuous improvement processes. By highlighting these discontinuities, the graph underscores the need to strengthen the culture of record-keeping and analysis within the educational institution.

The analysis of specific objective three focused on establishing an efficient academic management model, in which the integration of mission, pedagogical objectives, and monitoring mechanisms aligned processes under a framework of continuous improvement. The use of the Balanced Scorecard and the institutional improvement plan made it possible to link goals, responsible parties, and periodic measurement, which facilitated the adaptation and adjustment of academic processes based on results; the model's effectiveness was found in the functionality of feedback loops and in the ownership of the processes by teaching and administrative teams; The Balanced Scorecard linked planning and execution, identified priorities, assigned responsibilities, and projected improvements based on the systematic analysis of data.

The illustration demonstrated how efficiency and effectiveness in academic management depended on the direct and operational link between institutional components and pedagogical processes; the mission informed the pedagogical design and continuously connected it to practices, classroom management, and academic monitoring; the articulation between instructional planning and the graduate profile allowed classroom practices to be aligned with institutional goals; this model required a continuous evaluation cycle in which each level received feedback based on results and systematic analysis; the impact of the institutional mission was verified in each process through monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

The institutional improvement plan featured a structure that linked directly to the strategic map and the logic of the efficient academic management model. Each process included strategies, responsible parties, timelines, and evaluation mechanisms, which facilitated the traceability of actions and the measurement of progress. The systematization of feedback, the use of external evaluations, and the holding of periodic meetings with families demonstrated an adaptable system. The

model's efficiency was sustained by the institutional capacity to monitor, provide feedback, and adjust processes according to the needs and outcomes of the context.

The operational plan revealed the intention to systematize academic management under a framework of continuous improvement, integrating actions, strategies, goals, indicators, responsible parties, and alignment with policies. It allowed for the identification of strengths and gaps; the fragmentation of responsibility and the uneven ownership of processes depended on the individual commitment of each institutional actor. The timeline highlighted the tension between academic cycles and implementation timelines, which required prioritizing activities and adjusting expectations in light of constraints; monitoring revealed clear indicators, but the challenge of systematizing data collection and use persisted; the need to strengthen self-assessment, documentation, and feedback remained an institutional priority.

It is worth noting that the analysis of the institutional model was based on a triangulation of documents, specialized literature, and interviews with key stakeholders; to a certain extent, this procedure made it possible to reconstruct the development of academic management from its origins to the current situation. In a way, the systematic review of the literature and comparison with international benchmarks highlighted the need to contextualize models and avoid mechanical transplants; thus, the institutional characterization was not limited to formal aspects but addressed the actual processes involved in management.

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Finally, with regard to evaluation, inclusion, and participation, it was found that institutional evaluations and monitoring mechanisms were not used systematically to inform the curriculum or guide adjustments; in a way, the scattered nature of support and the inequality among campuses underscored the urgency of systematizing strategies and closing gaps. It is worth noting that institutional participation bodies played a largely regulatory role, leaving the creation of spaces for pedagogical dialogue and collective improvement unaddressed.

The illustration allows for a precise observation of the gap between institutional self-evaluation and external assessment of the components of academic management; each axis represents a fundamental process within the school's structure, showing how internal recognition tends to remain at minimal levels, merely stating the formal existence of the evaluated elements, whereas observations by external agents identify partial progress or incipient adoption in pedagogical design, revealing the presence of dynamics that go beyond the institution's self-perception.

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The institutional improvement plan featured a structure that linked directly to the strategic map and the logic of the efficient academic management model. Each process included strategies, responsible parties, timelines, and evaluation mechanisms, which facilitated the traceability of actions and the measurement of progress. The systematization of feedback, the use of external evaluations, and the holding of periodic meetings with families demonstrated an adaptable system; the model's efficiency was sustained by the institution's capacity to monitor, provide feedback on, and adjust processes according to the needs and outcomes of the context.

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The discussion of the results allowed for an understanding of academic management as a system of interdependent relationships, consistent with the views of Fernando Augusto and Quintero Ortiz (2023), who identified the need for cohesion among school management, quality, and efficiency. The study showed that the actual coordination between planning, teacher ownership, and data use was limited; although formal structures existed, operational functioning depended on individual initiative and context—just as happens when the curriculum is up-to-date on paper but its day-to-day implementation reveals gaps and resistance.

Ramos and Vásquez (2023) emphasized the importance of developing academic management models tailored to institutional determinants. The research at Soacha Avanza La Unidad demonstrated that monitoring tools, although standardized, lacked ownership; one example was the existence of self-assessment matrices with low teacher participation, which led to results that were not very representative and of limited use for decision-making. The culture of information use followed the same pattern: data was collected but not systematized or used to adjust practices or innovate.

Sánchez et al. (2022) argued that a culture of academic quality is a prerequisite for improvement in rural contexts; the case of this institution showed that, although progress was made on some indicators, the institutional culture had not yet integrated self-assessment or self-regulation as standard practices. For example, marked differences were identified among campuses regarding the equitable distribution of resources and student support, with no policy in place to standardize practices or outcomes.

The nascent use of tools such as the Balanced Scorecard highlighted another relevant aspect: its implementation made it possible to identify indicators and those responsible for them, but it failed to establish a culture of effective monitoring. Collective participation remained a challenge; the academic council and school administration fulfilled regulatory functions but offered little opportunity for joint, y

analysis of pedagogical processes, as seen in meetings where time is spent on administrative procedures rather than pedagogical debate.

## Conclusions

The research made it possible to characterize the institution's academic management, identify the gap between regulatory guidelines and actual adoption by teaching teams, and demonstrate that systematic monitoring represents a weakness that impacts the coherence between what is planned and what is executed. A comparison with theoretical frameworks showed that efficient models are based on flexible networks and the use of data, collective reflection, and well-being, which poses challenges in contexts of diversity and vulnerability.

The triangulation of data and institutional voices revealed that the components of design, classroom practices, assessment, and monitoring exist but operate in isolation; pedagogical decision-making is not always grounded in empirical evidence, which weakens the model's consistency; the diagnosis of critical nodes served as the basis for defining conditions for transformation and developing a monitoring system geared toward progressive improvement. The analysis of academic management highlighted the need to address pedagogical design, practices, classroom management, and follow-up as interdependent links; the relational model made it possible to visualize functional dependencies and organize the improvement cycle; the transition from a formalistic management approach to one guided by evidence and coordinated action established itself as a driver of change and reinforced the idea of the school as an adaptive system.

The formalization of the model and the development of the Balanced Scorecard facilitated decision-making and periodic evaluation. Progress was observed in planning and evaluation, but gaps persisted in resources, academic remediation, and student support. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data made it possible to validate results and prioritize actions.

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