

## Systematic Review to Improve Management Skills in Pedagogical Leadership

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### Abstract

*The present review addresses how educational leaders can improve their managerial skills to address current challenges in the field of education. Current research 18 that met strict inclusion and exclusion criteria was identified through a comprehensive review of all articles published for the period 2020 and 2024 in databases such as Scopus, Scielo, ScienceDirect, and Web of Science. The results show that the management of educational institutions and the effectiveness of pedagogical leaders can be profoundly changed by implementing educational programs that incorporate managerial skills. Numerous studies delineate the importance of continuous professional development, institutional support, and effective resource allocation, while pointing out the demographic and cultural elements that impact educational leadership. To increase academic achievement and educational quality by strengthening managerial competencies, it is necessary to improve pedagogical leadership. This can be achieved by developing managerial and emotional skills, providing institutional support and ongoing training, and taking into account the cultural and demographic environment.*

**Keywords:** Management Skills, Pedagogical Leadership, Educational Management, Professional Training, Institutional Support.

### INTRODUCTION

To address new educational problems and improve educational levels, pedagogical management leaders with a solid administrative background are essential in today's educational environment. With the aim of providing a solid basis for future research and educational strategies, we seek to locate and evaluate studies developed in the last five years, focusing on the development of these competencies. By defining and evaluating management competencies, the aim is to identify and provide a theoretical and practical framework that allows professional development to improve the management skills of pedagogical leaders.

The central problem lies in the variability of approaches and methodologies for the development of management skills in pedagogical leaders. There are various investigations that develop different methodologies and approaches to the development of managerial leaders in different areas—political, ethnic, and geographic—creating a need for comprehensive and systematic analysis to identify best educational practices (Bermúdez & Bravo, 2016; Mogrovejo, 2014; Oliva & López, 2019; Vásquez, 2017; Villalta et al., 2022; Yauri, 2019).

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The justification for this study lies in the importance of strengthening the management skills of pedagogical leaders since efficient educational management and effective pedagogical leadership are essential to improve educational results and face current challenges. Bashir et al. (2023), Karve and Aggarwal (2018), Khan and Naimi (2024), Popescu et al. (2020), and Shirbagi (2018) highlight the need to efficiently manage human resources and adapt to dynamic work environments, policies, and innovative business models to organize complex situations and capabilities applicable to educational leadership. Saniuk et al. (2023), Patacsil and Tablatin (2017), Razavi et al. (2023), and Ryskaliyev et al. (2024) emphasize the value of technological and

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management knowledge in sophisticated industrial environments, which can also be extrapolated to the educational context to improve adaptation to technological changes and increase efficiency in school management. Castillo & Niño (2020), Morales (2013), Rukchart et al. (2022), and Solís (2020) contributed insights on how administrative skills for aspiring professionals improve technical competence and teamwork as base mechanisms for satisfactory managerial performance.

The theoretical framework of this review is based on theories of transformational leadership and educational management, which emphasize the importance of vision, motivation, and innovation in pedagogical leadership. Theorists such as Matsuo (2019) and Nader and Castro (2007) have highlighted how transformational leadership can inspire and motivate teachers and students to achieve higher performance. Furthermore, the situational leadership theories of Chen et al. (2020) and Duarte (2021) suggest that educational leaders must adapt to the specific circumstances of their institutions to be effective within their educational environments.

From a regulatory perspective, various countries and international organizations have established frameworks and standards for the training and development of managerial skills in educational leaders. UNESCO and the OECD have promoted educational policies that emphasize the importance of continuous training and professional development of educational leaders. Programs such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in the United Kingdom and the Framework for Leadership Standards in Australia are examples of regulatory efforts to standardize and improve educational leadership competencies.

Philosophically, this research aligns with social constructivism and pragmatism, which emphasize learning through experience and collaboration. Subero et al. (2018) on Dewey's reflective learning and Vygotsky's meaningful learning have argued that learning is a social and contextual process, which is particularly relevant for the development of managerial skills in educational leaders, who must navigate and manage complex and diverse dynamics in their institutions.

Finally, the expected results of this systematic review include the identification of key managerial competencies for effective pedagogical leadership and the development of practical recommendations for the training and professional development of educational leaders. This study aims to contribute to the global understanding of best practices in educational management and pedagogical leadership, providing a solid foundation for future educational research and policies that promote the development of effective and sustainable management skills in pedagogical leaders around the world by examining the management of educational transformation, demonstrating how thoughtful preparation and communication can facilitate school transitions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For the eligibility of scientific articles, a preliminary search was carried out for studies available in information sources indexed in international databases: Scopus, Scielo, and Web of Science. The search focused on two variables: "management skills" and "pedagogical leadership." Although both variables are related to different terminologies, inclusion and exclusion criteria will be applied to select those developed in the educational field.

A non-experimental, descriptive design was adopted (Gonzales & Covino, 2021; Hernández et al., 2014), using the PRISMA statement (Page et al., 2021) for the selection and analysis of studies.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The main objective was to identify the variables associated (keywords) with both variables for a qualitative analysis that links the various investigations. In this way, the results of this study will reduce the existing gap around this relationship and facilitate a better understanding of both constructs to contribute to the improvement of student learning.

### **Sample**

The population and sample included relevant studies on managerial skills and pedagogical leadership in educational contexts. Regarding the temporal level, the most current studies will be included for the range January 2020 – July 2024 (Bernardo et al., 2015; Mucha et al., 2021). Of the studies found, those that met the

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established inclusion and exclusion criteria were selected, guaranteeing validity and reliability through the rigorous application of the PRISMA criteria (Hutton et al., 2016; Moher et al., 2014; Urrutia & Bonfill, 2010).

Regarding the criteria used for the selection of articles, the following were considered: (a) educational subject, (b) year of publication between 2020 and 2024, (c) type of publication (articles and open access), (d) developed in the educational context, and (e) with quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodological approaches. The exclusion criteria were: (a) categories not related to the educational subject, (b) articles published outside the range of years 2020 to 2024, (c) restricted access, (d) articles developed in contexts of special educational needs or single cases, and (e) studies without a methodological approach such as essays, books, letters, and conferences.

The search was carried out in July 2024, using the following equations based on the Spanish, English, and Portuguese languages:

Equation 1:

("directives" OR "direction") AND ("capabilities" OR "skills") AND ("leadership" AND ("pedagogical" OR "educational"))

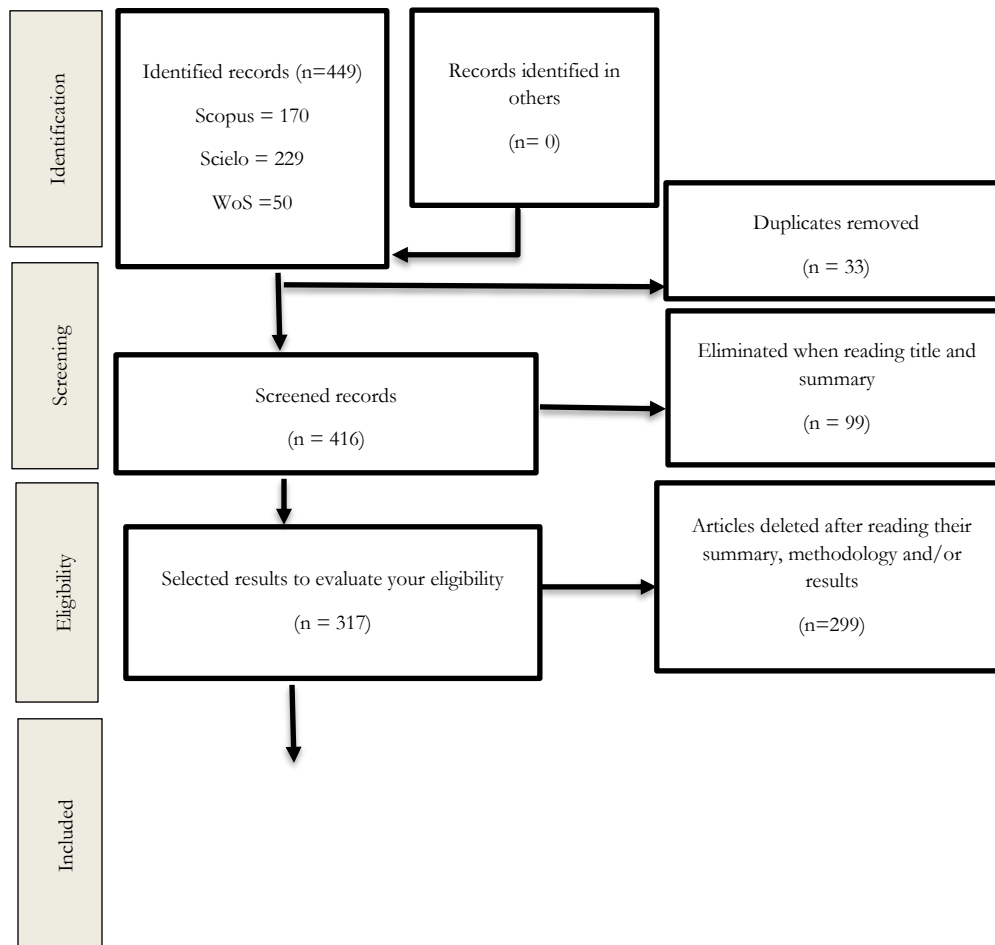
Equation 2:

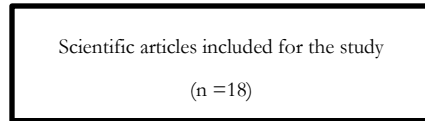
("management" OR "managerial") AND ("capabilities" OR "skills") AND ("leadership" AND ("pedagogical" OR "educational"))

**Table 1: Number of articles included and excluded from the identified population**

| Database       | Included articles | Excluded articles |               | Total |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|
|                |                   | First review      | Second review |       |
| Scopus         | 11                | 64                | 95            | 170   |
| Scielo         | 7                 | 38                | 184           | 229   |
| Web of Science | 0                 | 30                | 20            | 50    |
| Total          | 18                | 132               | 299           | 449   |

Note: Own elaboration.





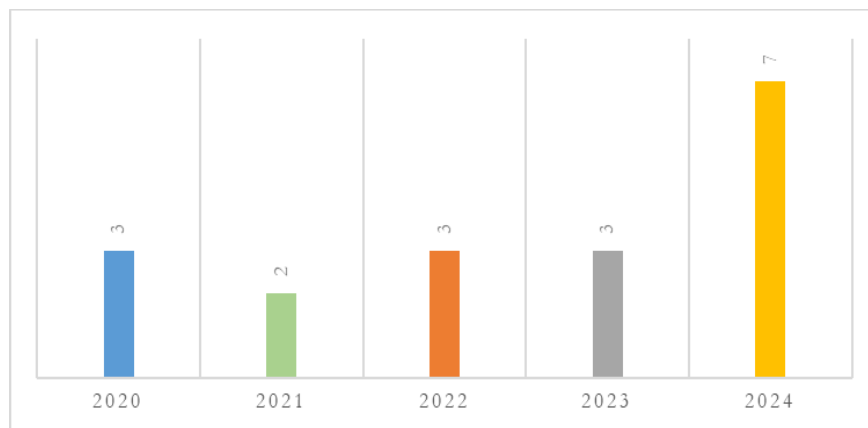
**Figure 1:** Diagram of results for the search and classification of articles based on the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

**Ethical aspects**

Furthermore, ethical aspects were respected, ensuring that the included studies complied with ethical research regulations, and the data were analyzed confidentially and anonymously (Ali, 2023).

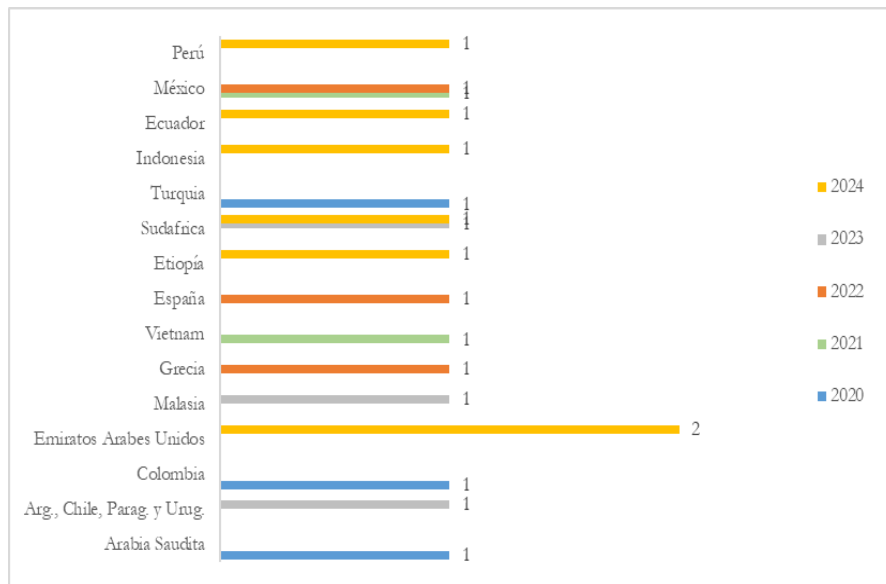
**RESULT AND FINDINGS**

According to Figure 2, for the period from 2020 to 2024, 18 scientific articles were published regarding the relationship between our study variables. Of these, N = 7 publications were from the year 2024.



**Figure 2:** Number of Publications per year

Figure 2 presents a summary of the results and the sample of each research study consulted regarding our study variables by year. From 2019 to 2024, a total of 18 articles were published worldwide. Of these, 7 articles were published in 2024, 3 in 2023, 2 in 2022, 2 in 2021, and 3 in 2020.



**Figure 3:** Number of publications per country and per year

Figure 3 presents a summary of the results and the sample of each research study consulted, considering our study variables, the year of publication, and the country of origin. It is observed that the greatest number of published articles is concentrated in the year 2024. Additionally, the country with the most publications in 2024 was the United Arab Emirates. However, over the last 5 years, the countries with the most publications are Mexico and South Africa.

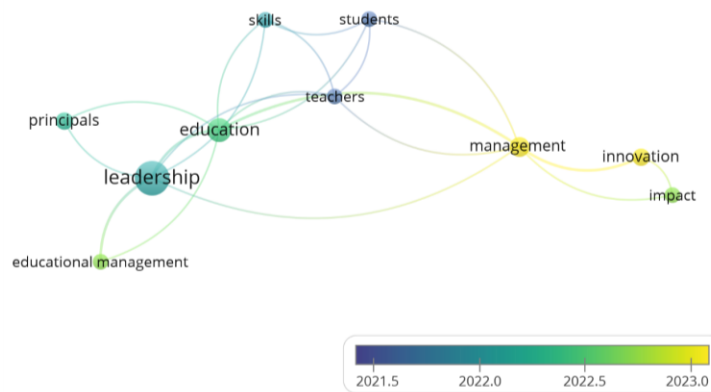
**Table 2: Scientific articles included in the study**

| Author                        | Qualification   | Sample   | Methodology   | Results   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Alsalamah and Callinan (2020) | Main barriers to the effectiveness of training for female directors in Saudi Arabia: A qualitative survey'                        | 12 directors and 12 supervisors, Saudi Arabia                        | qualitative, was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, questionnaires with open questions were used. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were carried out. | Four main obstacles to the effectiveness of the training were identified: structural problems of the program, low quality of the trainers, lack of motivation of the directors and inadequate conditions of the training center facilities, negatively affecting the results of the programs.   |
| Aviles et al. (2021)          | From student to principal: realities experienced in multigrade schools'   | A commissioned director, Mexico.                                     | Qualitative hermeneutic approach using narratives and in-depth interviews.  | The need for policies that strengthen the managerial profile of the commissioned teacher to improve educational quality in multigrade schools was identified.   |
| Bedoya et al. (2020)          | Managerial competencies in university management in Colombia'   | 272 managers, Colombia.  | descriptive quantitative and a non-experimental cross-sectional design.   | The results indicated that the competencies with the highest degree of identification among university managers were teamwork and leadership.   |
| Daulay et al. (2024)          | The influence of managerial competence and achievement motivation on the leadership effectiveness of secondary school principals' | 144 secondary school principals, Medan, Indonesia.                   | robust quantitative approach.   | They highlight the critical importance of improving management skills and fostering motivation among directors to elevate their leadership capabilities. Managerial competence translates into the ability to plan effective school programs and manage resources efficiently, while high achievement motivation drives principals to pursue excellence and overcome challenges.  |
| Hernandez (2022)              | Experiences developed by primary school directors in the exercise of their duties during the COVID-19 pandemic period             | 11 directors, Mexico.  | It adopted a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach with a qualitative and case study design.  | The results revealed that the directors adopted a form of mixed management with a managerial emphasis. They strengthened their leadership and digital skills to manage distance education, in addition to showing ethical commitment and empathy towards their school communities.  |
| Jiménez Macías et al. (2023)  | Diagnosis of school leadership competencies in Salesian directors   | 300 managers, carried out in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. | quantitative, applying an online questionnaire to 300 managers selected probabilistically from 219 Salesian schools.  | They reveal that Salesian leadership competence is highly developed (91.8%), followed by pedagogical and evangelizing management (87%) and coexistence and environmental pedagogy (89.6%). Resource management and sharing of goods obtained the lowest score (75.4%), highlighting areas of improvement in the evaluation of the family climate and the implementation of improvement processes in the work environment. |
| Klinck et al. (2023)          | Creating a high-performing school management team: providing talent for effective service delivery'                               | 12 school management teams in four secondary schools.                | qualitative technique with an exploratory research design.  | The research results indicate that SMTs possess competencies, knowledge, and characteristics that increase their abilities. Among the competencies assessed were leadership, communication, collaboration and problem-solving skills. Knowledge included  |

|                              |  |   |  |  |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
|                              |  |   |  | understanding school legislation and regulations, curriculum creation, and teaching strategies. Characteristics included flexibility, resilience, inventiveness and enthusiasm.  |
| Lozano Fernández, MA (2024)  | The Impact of Soft Skills on Management Performance: A Comprehensive Program'  | 49 directors and deputy directors, Chiclayo, Peru.  | The method used in the research is a basic non-experimental design.  | 12% of the sample has a high level of managerial performance, in terms of managing the conditions for improving learning, 18% presented the competence of strategic planning and the promotion of a favorable educational environment, in terms of the orientation of students. pedagogical processes, only 8% of the managers stood out in effectively guiding the pedagogical processes.   |
| Massouti et al. (2024)       | Exploring the nexus between female school leaders' perceptions of distributed instructional leadership, sociocultural dynamics, and student achievement in the Arab world' | 15 female school leaders from 10 primary schools, United Arab Emirates.                     | Qualitative, inductive methods.  | The results indicated that female school leaders in the Emirate of Fujairah have effectively adopted a distributed instructional leadership style, transforming school climate into learning organizations. This approach fosters an environment focused on learning, positively contributing to student outcomes. Leadership practices that emphasize data-driven decision making and promoting students' social and emotional well-being were significant in raising academic achievement. |
| Mohammad and Borkoski (2024) | Organizational conditions and teacher turnover in private schools in the United Arab Emirates'   | 34 teachers from various private schools, United Arab Emirates.                             | Quantitative approach, using a cross-sectional and correlational survey design.                            | Study results indicated that perceptions of a supportive environment and professional collaboration were significantly correlated with teachers' job satisfaction and retention intentions. Teachers perceived low influence on school-level decisions and a high workload, which negatively affected their job satisfaction.  |
| Muñoz and Román (2024)       | Training and professional identity of the directors of the educational district of Manta-Ecuador   | 16 managers, Ecuador.   | The research was carried out from a mixed perspective, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. | revealed that 62.5% of managers have postgraduate training in management and direction of educational centers, and 37.5% have more than four years of experience as managers. Through a survey and interviews, it was discovered that the majority of managers promote the participation of teachers and delegate both administrative and pedagogical activities.  |
| Nhan et al. (2021)           | Diversify thematic organization and extracurricular activities to improve the effectiveness of social skills education for high school students'                           | 20 schools and 2033 participants including teachers, administrators, and students, Vietnam. | qualitative and quantitative methods, collecting data through surveys and interviews.                      | The results showed that the most effective educational activities were those that involved coordination with parents and extracurricular activities. Teamwork and problem-solving methods were the most frequently used and considered most effective.   |
| Özdemir et al. (2020)        | Examining the relationship between school principals' 21st century skills and their strategic leadership as viewed by teachers'  | 424 primary and secondary school teachers, Türkiye.   | Quantitative research used a descriptive model   | Educational administrators' 21st century skills were found to be a significant predictor of their strategic leadership behaviors. As a result of the research, it was revealed that information literacy, technological literacy, responsibility, leadership and responsibility were significant predictors of managerial leadership behavior.   |

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|                           |  |   |   |   |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Sanz et al. (2022)        | School directors facing burnout syndrome: dimensions, risk factors and symptoms'                                       | applied to a sample of 76 directors of subsidized centers in the city of Valencia, Spain. | Quantitative research used a descriptive model  | The directors do not present high levels of burnout, although risk factors and mild symptoms are identified that could indicate emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Specific training and professionalization of the management function are proposed as measures to mitigate these risks and improve the quality of management performance in schools.                         |
| Selesho and Matjie (2024) | Exploring employee turnover intentions in a South African government education board'                                  | 11 government educational advisors, South Africa.   | Exploratory qualitative research.   | found that employee turnover intention in the board of education is due to management leadership styles, lack of trust on the part of management, inadequate communication, a poorly implemented performance management system, persistent workload, low remuneration and lack of work-life balance.  |
| Teferi and Debelo (2024)  | Exploring the experience of female middle managers in secondary schools in Jimma City, Ethiopia'                       | 22 educational managers, Ethiopia.  | The study methodology was based on a case study design.   | The results revealed several critical challenges, such as the lack of clear guidelines for competing for middle management positions and insufficient institutional support. Women in these roles faced difficulties such as undisciplined behavior of students, tardiness and absenteeism of teachers, lack of resources, and difficulty balancing work and personal responsibilities. |
| Thien and Lee (2023)      | The effects of the dimensions of school culture on the well-being of teachers in schools with low and high enrollment' | 452 primary school teachers, Malaysia.  | Using a cross-sectional quantitative survey design and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) | Regarding the results, it was observed that participatory decision making and the formal relationship had a significant impact on the well-being of teachers in schools with high enrollment, while in schools with low enrollment, goal orientation, leadership and the formal relationship were the most influential dimensions.  |
| Tsouvelas et al. (2022)   | Emotional processes, leadership, gender and affect in the workplace in interdisciplinary teams'                        | 19 directors and 128 subordinates, Greece.  | non-hierarchical and multilevel analysis.   | The study revealed that leaders' emotional competencies significantly influence subordinates' affect in the workplace. Specifically, cognitive reappraisal by leaders was a key strategy that predicted positive affect and reduced negative affect among subordinates.   |



**Figure 4:** Co-occurrence of keywords obtained from the Web of Science database for the publications reviewed in the years 2020-2024.



Figure 5: General summary of research published in the Scopus database between the years 1977-2024 for equation 2 of the search



Figure 6: Cloud of keywords obtained from the Scopus database based on keywords from research published in the years 1977-2024

Figure 4 shows the co-occurrence with which the keywords associated with the study variables are related: “managerial skills” and “pedagogical leadership.” It is observed that leadership is associated with five axes: directors, teachers, education, administration, and education management. Likewise, the latest research has focused on investigating more about the academic constructs of administration and innovation.

Figure 5 shows a general summary of the research published on the Scopus website, obtained for equation 2 of the study variables. It is observed that the studies cover from 1977 to the present, with a total of 166 documents reviewed, which is very few for that range of years, and associating 532 keywords related to the present review. Additionally, Figure 6 shows a visual representation of the previous related keywords.

A key element of educational administration is pedagogical leadership, and the management skills of school leaders play a fundamental role in its proper functioning. Through a comprehensive evaluation of 19 investigations, numerous qualities and characteristics have been discovered that affect the success of school leaders in the educational context. This analysis highlights how crucial emotional control, institutional support, and training are to improving pedagogical leadership. First of all, several studies emphasize that to increase leadership effectiveness, it is necessary to develop management and emotional capabilities. According to Daulay et al. (2024), high school administrators' performance as leaders is significantly affected by their managerial competence and achievement motivation. This research suggests that training programs should focus on improving these competencies to create a more productive learning environment. Likewise, Tsouvelas et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of emotional control and suggested training in cognitive reappraisal as a means to improve managerial abilities. According to these conclusions, effective pedagogical leadership requires a combination of emotional and technical competencies.

To further improve pedagogical leadership, training and continuing professional development are essential. According to Klinck et al. (2023), effective resource management and the development of a pleasant work environment largely depend on the possession of basic competencies in leadership, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. However, Muñoz and Román (2024) discovered that, to improve management skills, specific training in leadership and school management is essential. This research suggests that mentoring and



training programs that focus on soft skills and technical competencies are essential for school leaders to develop holistically.

The impact of institutional support and organizational circumstances is equally critical to the success of educational leadership. According to Selesho and Matjie (2024), employee turnover intention in the Board of Education is due to ineffective leadership styles and inadequately executed performance management. Mohammad and Borkoski (2024) have drawn attention to the fact that teachers' work happiness is greatly affected by professional collaboration and leadership support. These results imply that maintaining teachers and improving pedagogical leadership requires a positive organizational climate in addition to strong leadership connections.

Demographic and cultural factors also influence educational leadership. To improve school climate and student performance, Massouti et al. (2024) found that female school principals in the United Arab Emirates used a distributed instructional leadership style. Hernández (2022), for his part, stated that during the epidemic, primary school principals used a mixed strategy with an emphasis on management, highlighting the importance of mental and physical health. These variations highlight the need to take individual traits and cultural context into account when creating leadership development plans and training curricula.

Ultimately, two essential components of educational leadership success are resource management and sustainability. Jiménez Vivas et al. (2023) emphasized that to improve educational leadership and school sustainability, resource management must be strengthened. Aviles et al. (2021) also noted that the absence of specialized assistance and training presents difficulties for instructors who assume managerial responsibilities in multigrade schools. According to this research, institutional support, continuous training, and efficient resource management are crucial for the long-term viability and effectiveness of pedagogical leadership.

## **CONCLUSION**

To improve pedagogical leadership, it is essential to develop management and emotional capacities, offer institutional support and training, and take into account the cultural and demographic environment. The results indicate that for pedagogical leadership to be effective and lasting, a supportive organizational climate, technical competencies, and interpersonal skills are essential. Comprehensive training programs and institutional support strategies can be implemented to increase academic performance and educational quality by strengthening management capabilities. Research by authors such as Dauly et al. (2024) and Tsouvelas et al. (2022) highlights the importance of emotional control, achievement motivation, and management skills for effective leadership. These findings imply that to effectively educate school leaders, training programs should incorporate both technical and emotional components. Continuous training and institutional support are crucial components for building pedagogical leadership. Studies such as Muñoz and Román (2024) and Klinck et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of mentoring programs. Ambreen and Carey (2024) and Selesho and Matjie (2024) highlight the value of a positive work environment within the organization and strong leadership ties in increasing teacher retention, which is essential for effective pedagogical leadership. The sustainability of pedagogical leadership depends on considering the cultural context and managing resources well. Hernández (2022) and Ayman and Shaimaa (2024) provide examples of how demographic and cultural factors can affect the leadership demands and philosophies of school administrators. According to Avilés et al. (2021), adequate resource management is necessary to sustain the effectiveness of pedagogical leadership and guarantee long-term educational quality. Leadership in the educational field can be greatly strengthened if these strategies are put into practice.

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