



Decolonial institutional management model in regular education

Modelo de gestión institucional decolonial en educación regular

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Implementing decolonizing education in Bolivia requires translating normative principles into school management practices capable of linking curriculum, community, and local knowledge. Objective: To design and implement a decolonial institutional management model at the "Brasilia Tarde" Educational Unit in El Alto and describe changes observed in academic and community-participation indicators. Methods: A decolonial action-research approach integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence was conducted. Participants included 306 students, 27 teachers, and family and community actors. Institutional records from 2024 and 2025, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, planning documents, community records, and culturally agreed assessment rubrics were analyzed. Results: Attendance increased from 86.6% to 92.0%; failure decreased from 11.9% to 6.7%, and dropout from 4.4% to 2.3%. Family participation rose from 40% to 76%, while annual operational-plan goal attainment increased from 65% to 83%. Testimonies indicated greater contextualization of learning and shared community responsibility. Conclusions: The model was temporally associated with improved institutional indicators and stronger participation; however, causal effects and transferability require assessment through comparative designs and implementation in other contexts.

Keywords: institutional management; decoloniality; intercultural education; community participation; Indigenous knowledge.

RESUMEN

Introducción: La implementación de una educación descolonizadora en Bolivia exige que los principios normativos se traduzcan en prácticas de gestión escolar capaces de articular currículo, comunidad y saberes locales. Objetivo: Diseñar e implementar un modelo de gestión institucional decolonial en la Unidad Educativa "Brasilia Tarde", de El Alto, y describir los cambios observados en indicadores académicos y de participación comunitaria. Métodos: Se desarrolló una investigación-acción decolonial con integración de evidencia cuantitativa y cualitativa. Participaron 306 estudiantes, 27 docentes y actores familiares y comunitarios. Se analizaron registros institucionales de 2024 y 2025, entrevistas semiestructuradas, observación participante, documentos de planificación, actas y rúbricas de evaluación comunitaria. Resultados: La asistencia aumentó de 86,6 % a 92,0 %; la reprobación disminuyó de 11,9 % a 6,7 % y la deserción de 4,4 % a 2,3 %. La participación familiar pasó de 40 % a 76 % y el cumplimiento del POA de 65 % a 83 %. Los testimonios mostraron mayor contextualización del aprendizaje y corresponsabilidad comunitaria. Conclusiones: El modelo se asoció temporalmente con mejoras institucionales y fortalecimiento de la participación, aunque su efecto causal y transferibilidad requieren evaluación en diseños comparativos y otros contextos.

Palabras clave: gestión institucional; decolonialidad; educación intercultural; participación comunitaria; saberes indígenas.

INTRODUCTION

Bolivian education operates within a legal framework that recognizes the cultural, linguistic, and epistemic plurality of the State. The Political Constitution of the State establishes the intracultural, intercultural, and plurilingual character of education, while Law No. 070 “Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez” explicitly incorporates decolonization, community participation, and the articulation of education with life and production (1,2). This framework redefines the meaning of school management: the leadership of an educational unit should not be limited to administering resources and complying with procedures; rather, it should create institutional conditions that allow the principles of participation, cultural relevance, and community production to be expressed in daily practice.

The distance between normative recognition and its concretization in schools constitutes, however, a persistent problem. A systematic review on the integration of indigenous knowledge in schools shows that the effective inclusion of these knowledges requires transforming pedagogical relationships, criteria for the legitimacy of knowledge, and forms of participation, rather than merely incorporating cultural content in isolation (3). Complementarily, Latin American evidence on intercultural bilingual education indicates that policies that succeed in local experiences do not necessarily maintain the same results when scaled up, due to differences in resources, teacher training, coverage, and sociolinguistic conditions (4). Consequently, the implementation of intercultural policies depends on management devices capable of translating general principles into contextualized decisions.

Recent studies show that this contextualization acquires greater consistency when the territory and the community cease to function as peripheral elements. In indigenous schools in Mexico, education linked to the territory has made it possible to sustain communal knowledge through practices that articulate teachers, students, and community elders (5). In the Ecuadorian Amazon, analyses of decoloniality and critical interculturality show that recognizing local epistemologies implies disputing knowledge hierarchies and reviewing the institutional forms through which the validity of knowledge is defined in education (6). Likewise, the experiences of indigenous women professors in intercultural universities reveal that the production of knowledge from historically subalternized trajectories and territories expands the possibilities of building plural educational spaces and questioning monocultural academic structures (7).

The relationship between territory, learning, and youth agency has also been documented in Amazonian contexts. Situated learning can strengthen socio-environmental awareness when young people connect school experience with problems, memories, and responsibilities linked to their communities (8). However, the continuity of these proposals depends on institutional, political, and material conditions that sustain intercultural education in the face of economic, social, and environmental crises (9). These findings are relevant to school management because they indicate that cultural relevance is not solely a property of the curriculum; it also depends on how the institution organizes time, resources, participation, and decision-making mechanisms.

In the Mapuche context, it has been proposed to contextualize school education based on socio-educational knowledge constructed with families, teachers, and researchers, so that the curriculum dialogues with territorial experiences and concrete cultural practices (10). Subsequent studies on intercultural dialogue of knowledge indicate that recognizing indigenous socio-educational knowledge is necessary to overcome the disconnection between school, territory, and community forms of knowledge production (11). This perspective is especially relevant for institutions seeking to move from a declarative interculturality to a management that redistributes the capacity to participate, deliberate, and evaluate.

Bolivia offers a particularly significant scenario for this debate. Research conducted in the Altiplano has shown that schooling can reproduce hierarchies and forms of devaluation of local knowledge when literacy, language, and cultural legitimacy are defined exclusively from parameters external to the community (12). At the same time, the historical tradition of the Escuela-Ayllu de Warisata constitutes a precedent for emancipatory education articulated with community organization, work, and Indigenous autonomy (13). In the plurinational period, these tensions have not disappeared: state transformation processes combine institutional changes with continuities that force a critical analysis of the distance between decolonial discourse and everyday practice (14).

From a Latin American perspective, critical interculturality proposes overcoming models centered on simple cultural coexistence and moving toward educational relationships where different forms of knowledge and actors participate under more horizontal conditions (15). However, empirical evidence describing how these principles can be operationalized in the daily management of a regular educational unit and how their implementation relates to institutional indicators of

attendance, retention, family participation, and compliance with planning remains limited. This gap is relevant because the decolonial discussion runs the risk of remaining on a conceptual level if it is not accompanied by observable mechanisms of organization, participation, and evaluation.

In response to this problem, a decolonial institutional management model was designed and implemented in the “Brasilia Tarde” Educational Unit, located in the city of El Alto. The model articulated institutional planning, community participation, contextualization of learning, deliberative spaces, and community evaluation. The objective of the research was to design and implement this model and to analyze the changes observed between 2024 and 2025 in academic indicators, retention, family participation, and fulfillment of institutional goals, complementing the quantitative comparison with qualitative evidence from teachers, students, and families.

METHODS

The research was conducted using a decolonial action-research approach with integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence. The study was simultaneously aimed at transforming management practices and documenting the changes associated with the implementation of the model in the Educational Unit “Brasilia Tarde”, in the city of El Alto, Bolivia. For the quantitative component, an institutional before-after comparison was used based on consolidated records from 2024, considered as reference, and from 2025, corresponding to the implementation period. Since there was no comparison group or random assignment, the changes were interpreted as temporal variations associated with the institutional process and not as causal effects.

A total of 306 students from the three levels of the Regular Education Subsystem and 27 teachers organized into institutional committees participated. Mothers and fathers, representatives of neighborhood boards, and municipal authorities also took part as actors of the community component. The available documentation did not establish a fixed number for the latter groups, so their participation was used as a qualitative source and for community validation, without incorporating it into the denominator of the quantitative indicators.

The model was structured around the articulation between curriculum, community, and knowledge production. Its implementation included pedagogical councils, contextualized planning spaces, socio-productive fairs, participatory review of institutional goals, and community evaluation mechanisms. Information was obtained through semi-structured interviews with teachers, students, and families; participant observation in classrooms and councils; documentary analysis of the Annual Operational Plan (POA), the Socio-Productive Project (PSP), and institutional records; checklists; community meeting minutes; and consensus-based evaluation rubrics for fairs and workshops.

The quantitative indicators analyzed were average attendance, failure, dropout, family participation, and fulfillment of POA goals. For each indicator, annual percentages and absolute differences expressed in percentage points were calculated. No inferential tests were applied because the available data corresponded to institutional aggregates and not to a longitudinal individual database that would allow estimating variability, dependence between measurements, or adjustment for possible confounding factors.

Qualitative evidence was systematized by type of actor and source. Testimonies and observation records were cross-checked with institutional documents and minutes to identify convergences related to contextualization of learning, participation in decision-making, appropriation of local knowledge, and co-responsibility in management. Triangulation was carried out among interviews, observations, institutional documentation, and results of community evaluations. Preliminary findings were discussed in assemblies and pedagogical councils as a mechanism for feedback and social validation. To preserve identity in the presentation of results, testimonies were kept using alphanumeric actor codes.

RESULTS

The comparison of institutional records corresponding to the 2024 and 2025 school years allowed the identification of favorable changes in the 5 indicators considered to assess the evolution of the ‘Brasilia Tarde’ Educational Unit. In general terms, the data show a simultaneous improvement in attendance, student retention, family participation, and compliance with institutional planning. These changes occurred during the implementation period of the decolonial institutional management model and constitute the first level of evidence to analyze the transformations

observed in the educational community.

Average attendance increased from 86.6% in 2024 to 92.0% in 2025, representing an increase of 5.4 percentage points. This behavior indicates a greater regular presence of students in school activities during the second period analyzed. Although the indicator does not allow establishing the causes of the increase by itself, its evolution is relevant because it coincides temporally with the incorporation of practices aimed at strengthening the link between the school, families, and the community context. The increase in attendance also acquires importance when observed together with the decrease in indicators associated with difficulties in permanence and school trajectory.

Table 1. Comparison of institutional indicators between 2024 and 2025

Indicator	2024	2025	Difference (pp)
Average attendance	86,6 %	92,0 %	+5,4
Failure	11,9 %	6,7 %	-5,2
Dropout	4,4 %	2,3 %	-2,1
Family participation	40,0 %	76,0 %	+36,0
Compliance with POA goals	65,0 %	83,0 %	+18,0

Note. pp = percentage points. The percentages are derived from consolidated institutional records for 2024 and 2025. Authors' own elaboration.

In relation to school performance and retention, the failure rate decreased from 11,9 % to 6,7 %, equivalent to a reduction of 5,2 percentage points. Similarly, the dropout rate declined from 4,4 % to 2,3 %, a difference of 2,1 percentage points between both school years. The simultaneous reduction of these two indicators, accompanied by the increase in attendance, describes a more favorable institutional scenario in 2025 compared to 2024. Overall, the three indicators show that during the analyzed period, student presence increased and both the proportion of students who failed and those who dropped out of the educational process decreased.

The most pronounced transformations were recorded, however, in the components linked to community participation and institutional management. Family participation increased from 40.0% in 2024 to 76.0% in 2025, representing an increase of 36 percentage points. This variation was the largest in magnitude among all analyzed indicators. The records therefore show a considerably greater involvement of mothers, fathers, and family members in the activities carried out by the institution. This quantitative result corresponded with the testimonies collected during the qualitative component, in which families indicated greater intervention in spaces for deliberation and decision-making.

Compliance with the goals established in the Annual Operational Plan also showed a favorable trend, rising from 65.0% to 83.0%, equivalent to an increase of 18 percentage points. This result indicates that during 2025 a greater proportion of the planned institutional objectives was achieved. The improvement of this indicator coincided with the expansion of participation spaces and with the implementation of planning and evaluation mechanisms that involved different educational actors. However, the available data allow describing this temporal association, but not determining the specific weight of each component of the model on goal compliance.

The interpretation of these variations requires considering the nature of the design used. The data correspond to aggregate indicators from two successive administrations, and no one external comparison group was available. Consequently, the results do not allow establishing a direct causal relationship between the implementation of the model and the observed variations. Their main usefulness lies in showing that the application of the proposal took place during a period characterized by simultaneous improvements in the main academic, retention, participation, and institutional management indicators.

The qualitative component made it possible to complement this information and delve deeper into the way in which teachers, students, and families experienced the changes developed during the process. The testimonies showed convergent perceptions regarding a greater contextualization of learning, more active community participation, and a transformation of certain pedagogical and institutional practices.

Among teachers, a change identified with the greatest clarity was related to pedagogical planning. The testimony identified as D4 expressed that the PAT allowed "breaking the routine of the chalkboard," which reflects a perception of a shift from practices predominantly centered on exposition toward activities linked to concrete situations in the environment. The observations and records analyzed showed that contextualization began to occupy a more visible place within

planning, especially through problems and experiences recognizable to students.

Table 2. Synthesis of qualitative evidence by educational actor

Actor	Representative evidence	Institutional reading
Teachers	"The PAT allowed us to break the routine of the blackboard" (D4).	Greater contextualization of planning and openness to real problems.
Students	"When we used quinoa in the experiments, I understood the nutrients better" (E7).	Linking school content with environmental references.
Families	"Before, we only received information; now we decide together" (F1).	Transition from informative participation to co-responsibility in decisions.

Note. Codes D4, E7, and F1 identify testimonials from teacher, student, and family member, respectively. Own elaboration based on study interviews.

The students agreed in highlighting the value of relating the content to elements present in their daily reality. Testimony E7 pointed out that the use of quinoa in experimental activities facilitated the understanding of content related to nutrients. This evidence shows that the incorporation of cultural and productive referents from the context was perceived not only as a complementary element, but as a resource that favored the understanding of certain learning. The presence of this type of experience was also observed in school activities and socio-productive fairs developed during the implementation.

On the part of families, the testimonies reflected a change in the form of institutional participation. The expression "before we only received information; now we decide together," corresponding to record F1, synthesizes the perceived transition from a mainly informational relationship toward participation associated with deliberation and co-responsibility. This qualitative result is consistent with the quantitative increase recorded in family participation, which reached 76% during 2025.

Triangulation of interviews, participant observations, community meeting minutes, and planning documents allowed the identification of 3 convergent patterns. The first was related to increased use of environmental situations and resources as a starting point for certain pedagogical activities. The second corresponded to the expansion of deliberation spaces in which teachers, students, families, and community representatives participated. The third was linked to a more active presence of families and other social actors in institutional activities that were previously concentrated mainly in educational staff.

Within these processes, pedagogical councils were constituted as spaces for exchange and deliberation on the problems and decisions of the institution. The socio-productive fairs made visible the articulation between academic content, productive practices, and knowledge of the environment, while community evaluation mechanisms incorporated criteria agreed upon by different participants. These actions did not replace conventional forms of evaluation and planning, but rather added complementary spaces for participation and collective assessment of educational processes.

Overall, the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence describes a 2025 administration characterized by better indicators of attendance, failure, dropout, family participation, and compliance with the POA compared to 2024, accompanied by favorable perceptions of pedagogical contextualization and community participation. The convergence between institutional records and testimonies strengthens the descriptive consistency of the findings. However, the results do not allow determining how much of each variation corresponds specifically to the implemented model nor excluding the influence of external factors that occurred between both administrations. For this reason, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of an institutional evolution concurrent with the implementation of the model and not as a causal demonstration of its effect.

DISCUSSION

The results show that the implementation of the decolonial institutional management model coincided with improvements in attendance, failure, dropout, and compliance with the POA. The literature on school leadership holds that the influence of management on student outcomes is usually indirect and is expressed through organizational conditions, teacher capacity, pedagogical direction, and the construction of shared purposes (16). This reading is more consistent with the study data than a direct causal interpretation: the observed improvement can be understood as part of an institutional process in which management reorganized spaces for participation, planning,

and monitoring, without it being possible to estimate how much of the variation corresponds exclusively to the model.

The importance of context is also central in Latin America. A regional review of school leadership warns that management frameworks cannot be analyzed apart from institutional structures, local conditions, and educational policies that delimit the work of schools (17). In “Brasilia Tarde,” the proposal was not constructed as a neutral administrative scheme, but rather around situated devices—town meetings, fairs, contextualized planning, and community evaluation—that sought to respond to the sociocultural configuration of El Alto. This specificity constitutes a strength for local relevance, although it limits any claim of automatic replicability.

The increase in family participation, from 40% to 76%, is especially relevant. Culturally responsive leadership approaches posit that school leadership requires recognizing community knowledge, identities, and relationships and incorporating them into decision-making processes (18). Likewise, accumulated evidence on parental participation shows consistent associations between specific forms of family involvement and educational outcomes, although their effects depend on the type of participation and the context (19). In the present study, the qualitatively most important change was not only the greater presence of families, but also the transition noted by the participants themselves from receiving information to intervening in decisions.

The improvement of academic indicators should be interpreted with caution. Contemporary research on school leadership continues to show links between management practices and student outcomes, but emphasizes that such links are mediated by multiple factors and vary across contexts (20). Therefore, the reduction in failure and dropout observed between 2024 and 2025 does not in itself demonstrate causal efficacy. Its analytical value lies in the fact that the quantitative changes were consistent with testimonies describing greater relevance of school activities, participation, and connection between learning and local reality.

The incorporation of local knowledge appears as another plausible mechanism for strengthening relevance. The literature on science education has shown that indigenous knowledge can offer authentic contexts for learning and contribute to more comprehensive perspectives on nature, culture, and sustainability, provided that its incorporation is not reduced to decorative or decontextualized elements (21). In this study, the example of quinoa used by students shows a concrete form of cultural anchoring of scientific content. Although this is specific qualitative evidence, it illustrates how the environment can become a pedagogical resource when there is institutional flexibility to contextualize.

The need to systematically incorporate indigenous knowledge has also been identified in recent curricular analyses, which show that its presence can be fragmentary when there is no explicit articulation between curriculum, local actors, and pedagogical practices (22). This observation helps to interpret the function of the community spaces in the model: the community councils and fairs do not operate only as complementary activities, but as scenarios where knowledges can acquire educational legitimacy and be connected to institutional planning.

In specific areas such as chemistry teaching, the integration of local knowledge has shown potential to relate school content to cultural practices and everyday experiences, fostering connections between scientific concepts and socially significant contexts (23). This evidence is relevant for an educational unit in which contextualization was expressed in productive and experimental activities linked to environmental resources. However, the quality of this integration depends on avoiding simplistic equivalences between local knowledge and scientific knowledge and on maintaining explicit pedagogical criteria for selecting, contrasting, and working with both knowledge systems.

Finally, the very notion of decoloniality requires critical examination. Debates on indigeneity and power in Bolivia show that indigenous categories can acquire diverse political meanings and should not be treated as homogeneous identities or as automatically emancipatory institutional solutions (24). This caveat applies to the model analyzed: its decolonial character cannot be evaluated solely by the use of certain terms or activities, but rather by the extent to which it modifies decision-making relations, recognizes community knowledge, and prevents participation from becoming a symbolic practice without real impact.

The study has limitations that should be considered. First, it uses an institutional comparison of 2 periods without a control group, and therefore does not allow establishing causality. Second, the available indicators are aggregated, and it was not possible to perform statistical analyses at the individual level or to adjust for socioeconomic variables or other confounding factors. Third, the original documentation does not record an exact number of family and community participants, nor a complete qualitative coding matrix. Finally, the experience corresponds to a single urban educational unit. Future research should incorporate comparative designs or time series, individual

databases, explicit qualitative analysis procedures, and evaluation of implementation in schools with different territorial characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

The decolonial institutional management model was implemented in the “Brasilia Tarde” Educational Unit during a period in which the main available institutional indicators improved. Between 2024 and 2025, attendance, family participation, and compliance with POA goals increased, while failure and dropout rates decreased. These changes were consistent with testimonies that described greater contextualization of learning, participation in decisions, and articulation between school and community.

The main contribution of the experience lies in operationalizing decoloniality through concrete management mechanisms: deliberative spaces, contextualized planning, socio-productive fairs, community participation, and evaluation built with the institution's actors. In this way, management shifts from an exclusively administrative function toward a political-pedagogical function centered on cultural relevance and co-responsibility.

The results do not allow us to affirm that the model alone caused the observed improvements, nor that it can be transferred without adjustments to other institutions. Its utility lies in offering a situated empirical experience that can guide further evaluations. To strengthen the evidence, comparative designs, longitudinal follow-up, individual databases, and a more precise description of the participation processes and qualitative analysis are required. The consolidation of the model will depend on maintaining coherence between decolonial principles and effective practices of decision-making, learning, and evaluation.

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