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ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION MODEL FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN URBAN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Urban schools face persistent challenges in ensuring high-quality, equitable learning, especially in contexts marked by socio-economic vulnerability and institutional fragmentation. This article proposes and empirically illustrates an Administrative Integration Model (AIM) aimed at improving the quality of education in urban school environments through the coordinated action of leadership, organizational structures, school climate, and professional learning communities. The study follows a sequential explanatory and mixed-methods design applied in 18 urban public schools, with the participation of 18 principals, 54 middle leaders and 432 teachers. Quantitative data were collected using validated scales of school climate, distributed leadership, and organizational learning, along with standardized indicators of performance in language and mathematics. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with school leaders and teachers. The results indicate that higher levels of administrative integration are significantly associated with a better perception of school climate and higher student academic performance, even when controlling for socioeconomic composition. The dimensions with the greatest predictive power are integrated leadership teams, data-informed decision-making, and institutionalized collaboration among faculty. Qualitative findings reveal that administrative integration functions as a "relational infrastructure" that aligns actors, processes, and resources around learning improvement. The article concludes that the IYM offers a viable framework for redesigning governance and management in urban schools and suggests implications for future policy, training and research.

KEYWORDS: Administrative Integration, Educational Quality, Urban Schools, Distributed Leadership, School Climate, Organizational Learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of education in urban school environments continues to be one of the main challenges of contemporary education systems. Cities concentrate a wide cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic diversity that has a direct impact on teaching and learning processes.

Added to this are structural factors such as residential segregation, student mobility, scarcity of resources, and institutional fragmentation, which make it difficult to generate stable and equitable conditions for learning (Amsalu & Belay, 2024; Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025). In this context, educational quality cannot be understood only as an academic result, but as a multidimensional framework that involves the school climate, internal governance, pedagogical leadership, institutional trust, teacher well-being and the organizational capacity of schools.

Recent studies have shown that school climate acts as a key predictor of student achievement, satisfaction, and retention, particularly in urban schools with high socioeconomic vulnerability (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).

The presence of a positive institutional climate—characterized by relationships of trust, clear rules, safe environments, and high academic expectations—not only favors academic performance, but also strengthens students' sense of belonging and resilience. Similarly, comparative analyses between high- and low-effectiveness schools show that institutions with better results tend to have more consolidated collaborative cultures, more favorable work climates, and organizational structures that prioritize learning (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).

At the same time, the emerging literature on distributed leadership and educational governance suggests that management models focused exclusively on the figure of the manager are insufficient to face the complexity of the current urban environment. Recent research indicates that management teams that share responsibilities, delegate strategic functions, and empower teacher leaders tend to obtain better results in pedagogical innovation, institutional cohesion, and responsiveness to emerging problems (Galdames-Calderón, 2023; Lin, 2022).

In this sense, distributed leadership does not only imply a functional redistribution of power, but the creation of a professional culture where decision-making is shared, collaborative work is institutionalized and responsibility for learning is assumed collectively.

Likewise, current perspectives on educational organizations as learning systems highlight the need to build institutional structures that favor permanent processes of reflection, collaboration, and professional development. Pinheiro and Matias Alves (2024) argue that the formation of stable teaching teams and the sustained functioning of professional learning communities promote profound transformations in school culture, enabling the emergence of new pedagogical practices and forms of distributed leadership. These findings reinforce the idea that educational quality is closely linked to the ability of schools to learn, adapt and innovate collectively.

At the international level, organizations such as the OECD have warned that improving education in urban contexts requires integrated governance models that connect the internal management of schools with wider territorial networks. Urban education, in this framework, must assume an "ecosystemic" approach that articulates school, community, and external actors, generating data-based policies, inter-institutional support systems, and multilevel collaboration structures (OECD, 2021).

This approach shows that administrative fragmentation and lack of intersectoral coordination remain major barriers to improving performance in urban areas.

Against this backdrop, it is necessary to have integrated management models that allow for an articulated and efficient response to the complexities of urban education.

However, recent literature indicates that there is still a gap regarding the conceptualization and evaluation of administrative models that integrate leadership, school climate, teacher collaboration, and information systems in a unified framework aimed at improving learning. Existing contributions tend to analyze these dimensions in isolation, without proposing an integration scheme that specifically responds to contemporary urban challenges.

Therefore, this article proposes an Administrative Integration Model (AIM) aimed at improving the quality of education in urban environments, articulating key dimensions such as institutional leadership, data integration, collaborative work, and the relational mechanisms that build cohesion and shared meaning.

This model is empirically examined in a sample of urban schools, assessing its impact on school climate and academic achievement. In this way, it seeks to provide the literature with an analytical and operational framework that allows strengthening

school governance and guiding educational improvement policies contextualized to the urban challenges of today.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study of educational quality in urban contexts requires a multidimensional approach that simultaneously considers structural, organizational, pedagogical, and relational factors. In this framework, the Administrative Integration Model (AIM) is based on recent contributions from the international literature on school climate, distributed leadership, integrated governance, and organizational learning. Next, the main conceptual foundations that support the model are developed.

2.1. Educational Quality and Urban School Environments

Educational quality in urban schools is marked by historical inequalities, socio-spatial segregation, and institutional pressure, which requires robust governance, adaptive management, and coherent pedagogical processes. In the last five years, studies have underlined that educational quality must be approached from multidimensional perspectives, integrating cognitive, socio-emotional, institutional, and community factors (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).

Recent research has shown that urban schools with higher vulnerability rates require school management capable of articulating internal and external actors, strengthening institutional cohesion, and ensuring safe learning environments (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).

This multidimensional approach is reinforced by the OECD's global perspective, which highlights that resilient education systems must adopt governance models that integrate community networks, municipal policies, and school strategies, especially in urban areas with high population density and social complexity (OECD, 2021). Educational quality in urban environments, therefore, is not limited to academic performance, but involves cultural, structural and organizational conditions that sustain learning.

2.2. School Climate as a Predictor of Educational Outcomes

School climate is one of the most studied and robust predictors of academic performance and teacher and student well-being. Recent research indicates that school climate acts as a fundamental mediating variable between leadership practices and educational outcomes (Amsalu & Belay, 2024). This climate is made up of dimensions such as

- Interpersonal relations
- Perceptions of justice and security,
- Academic expectations,
- Teaching support,
- Physical environment.

Delgado-Galindo et al. (2025) demonstrated that high-efficiency schools maintain more positive climates thanks to consistent leadership practices, shared norms, and a stable collaborative culture. This becomes essential in urban environments, where social complexity can erode institutional cohesion if there are no integrating administrative mechanisms in place.

Table 1: Main Dimensions of School Climate According to Recent Research (2019–2025).

DIMENSION OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE	**DESCRIPTION**	**RECENT STUDIES**
INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP	Clarity, coherence and leadership support.	Amsalu & Belay (2024)
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS	Positive interactions between teachers, students and administrators.	Delgado-Galindo et al. (2025)
SAFE ENVIRONMENT	Procedures for coexistence, discipline and socio-emotional support.	OECD (2021)
ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS	Beliefs about the learning capacity of students.	Delgado-Galindo et al. (2025)
PHYSICAL CONDITIONS	Resources, infrastructure and maintenance.	OECD (2021)

2.3. Distributed Leadership in Urban Schools

School leadership has evolved from hierarchical models to collaborative, distributed approaches that assign responsibilities to multiple actors. Galdames-Calderón (2023) stresses that distributed leadership promotes teacher professional development by enabling active participation in decision-making, strengthening capacities, and expanding internal governance.

Lin (2022), through a multinational analysis, concludes that distributed leadership increases teacher innovation and improves the quality of pedagogical processes.

In urban environments, organizational complexity justifies the need for shared leadership, capable of coordinating

- Multidisciplinary teams,
- External programs operating in the school,
- Community networks,
- Teachers with pedagogical leadership roles.

Table 2: Impacts of Distributed Leadership Identified in Recent Studies.

IMPACT	DEMONSTRATION AT SCHOOL	EVIDENCE
TEACHING INNOVATION	Use of active strategies, interdisciplinary projects.	Lin (2022)
PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION	Teaching teams with autonomy in planning.	Galdames-Calderón (2023)
SHARED DECISION-MAKING	Technical councils, operational committees and working groups.	OECD (2021)
INSTITUTIONAL COHESION	Coordination between academic and administrative areas.	Delgado-Galindo et al. (2025)

2.4. Organizational Learning and Professional Learning Communities

Organizational learning is understood as a process through which the school develops collective capacities to reflect, improve and transform practices. Pinheiro and Matias Alves (2024) argue that professional learning communities (CPAs) promote profound transformations in institutional culture, as long as they exist:

- Stable structures of collaboration,
- Clear pedagogical leadership,
- Systematic use of data for decisions,
- Collective reflection on teaching practice.

In urban schools, CPAs help to address the high turnover of teachers and the heterogeneity of the student body, allowing practices to be institutionalized and not depend on isolated individuals.

2.5. Integrated Governance in Urban Education Systems

Integrated educational governance involves the articulation of internal and external actors

- Managers
- Teachers
- Families
- Community services,
- Municipal bodies.

The OECD highlights that cities require flexible governance models that connect macro (national policies), meso (districts and municipalities) and micro (educational centres) levels to respond to the challenges of urban diversity (OECD, 2021). This approach aligns with the purpose of AIM, which seeks to consolidate coherent administrative structures, integrated use of data, and cross-sectoral coordination.

2.6. Conceptual Foundations of the Administrative Integration Model (AIM)

Based on recent literature, the AIM articulates four main dimensions:

Table 3: Dimensions of the Administrative Integration Model (AIM).

DIMENSION	APPROACH	RECENT THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS
INTEGRATED INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP (ILS)	Collaborative management teams, distributed roles.	Galdames-Calderón (2023); Lin (2022)
DATA AND INFORMATION INTEGRATION (ISDI)	Systematic use of evidence for decisions.	OECD (2021)
CLIMATE AND RELATIONAL INTEGRATION (RCI)	Institutional cohesion, coexistence and shared expectations.	Delgado-Galindo et al. (2025); Amsalu & Belay (2024)
INTEGRATION OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES (PLCI)	Structured and continuous teaching collaboration.	Pinheiro & Matias Alves (2024)

These dimensions form a framework that explains how administrative integration strengthens the school climate and, consequently, educational achievement.

2.7. Conceptual Synthesis and Theoretical Articulation

Recent literature converges on three fundamental ideas that underpin AIM

1. Educational quality depends on both pedagogical variables and organizational structures.
1. Studies show that leadership and internal governance directly influence learning, mainly mediated by school climate (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).
2. Administrative integration is key to school effectiveness in urban contexts. Institutional fragmentation, which is common in urban schools, can be mitigated through shared leadership models, articulated use of data, and consolidated professional teams (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).
3. Learning communities drive sustained transformations.

CPAs make it possible to give coherence to teaching practices, improving innovation and professional satisfaction (Pinheiro & Matias Alves, 2024).

3. METHODOLOGY

The present research was developed under a mixed approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods in order to analyze the relationship between Administrative Integration (AIM), school climate and educational results in urban schools.

The methodological design is based on recent recommendations for complex educational studies that combine structural analysis and interpretative deepening (Amsalu & Belay, 2024; Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).

3.1. Research Design

A mixed sequential explanatory design (QUAN → QUAL) was used, which allows first identifying quantitative patterns and then delving into the experiences and perceptions of the participants. This approach has been recommended in contemporary studies on school climate, distributed leadership, and organizational structures (Lin, 2022; Pinheiro & Matias Alves, 2024), due to its ability to capture both numerical variations and situated meanings.

Table 4: Justification of the Applied Mixed Design.

PHASE	OBJECTIVE	TYPE OF ANALYSIS	RECENT THEORETICAL SUPPORT
QUANTITATIVE PHASE	Measure levels of administrative integration, school climate, and academic achievement.	Descriptive statistics, correlational, hierarchical regression, SEM.	Amsalu & Belay (2024); Delgado-Galindo et al. (2025)
QUALITATIVE PHASE	Understand internal mechanisms and perceptions of school personnel.	Thematic analysis, triangulation.	Pinheiro & Matias Alves (2024)
INTEGRATION	To give explanatory coherence to the AIM model.	Mixed meta-inference.	Lin (2022); OECD (2021)

3.2. Population and Sample

The research was carried out in 18 urban public schools belonging to a metropolitan educational district characterized by high socioeconomic heterogeneity. Stratified sampling was used, which ensured the representativeness of three levels of institutional performance (high, medium and low).

Participants

- 18 school principals
- 54 middle leaders (academic coordinators, area heads)
- 432 teachers
- 4,860 students (academic performance data)

This distribution is consistent with recent urban studies that require analyzing multiple organizational levels to identify leadership and climate patterns (Galdames-Calderón, 2023).

Table 5: Distribution of the Sample by Type of Participant.

Group	n	Percentage of total
Directors	18	3.4%
Middle Leaders	54	10.1%
Teachers	432	80.4%
Students (aggregated data)	4,860	—

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

Four main instruments were used

3.3.1. Administrative Integration Scale (AIS)

Developed specifically for this study, based on theoretical elements of distributed leadership (Lin, 2022; Galdames-Calderón, 2023) and integrated governance (OECD, 2021).

- 32 items, 5-point Likert scale.
- Four subscales: ILS, ISDI, RCI and PLCI.
- Total reliability: $\alpha = .93$.

3.3.2. School Climate Scale

Based on contemporary models of school climate and effectiveness (Amsalu & Belay, 2024; Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).

- 20 items, 5 dimensions.
- Total reliability: $\alpha = .91$.

3.3.3. Indicators of Academic Achievement

We used standardized results in Language and Mathematics from the latest available national assessment.

- Normalized data (z-score) and aggregated data at the school level.

3.3.4. Interviews and Focus Groups

- 18 interviews with directors.
- 6 focus groups with intermediate leaders and teachers.
- **Questions focused on** administrative coordination, use of data, teacher collaboration and perception of the school climate.

Table 6: Instruments Used and Variables Analysed.

INSTRUMENT	VARIABLE TYPE	DIMENSIONS	RELIABILITY	REFERENCE AUTHORS
AIS	Independent	4 AIM dimensions	a = .93	Lin (2022); OECD (2021)
SCHOOL CLIMATE SCALE	Mediator	Leadership, relationships, safety, expectations, environment	a = .91	Amsalu & Belay (2024); Delgado-Galindo et al. (2025)
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS	Dependent	Language and Mathematics	—	OECD (2021)
INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS	Qualitative	Leadership, climate, collaboration, data	—	Galdames-Calderón (2023)

3.4. Procedures

The procedures followed recent ethical and methodological standards for urban educational studies (OECD, 2021).

1. Application of surveys: Digitally administered through a protected platform. – Teacher response rate: 87.1%.
2. Obtaining academic data: Provided by the regional education authority. – Normalized for comparability between schools.
3. Qualitative fieldwork: Three visits per school. – Compilation of narratives on administrative functioning.
4. Data coding and safeguarding: NVivo software for qualitative analysis. – SPSS and AMOS for quantitative analysis.

3.5. Quantitative Data Analysis

Robust statistical methods recommended for research relating school climate and distributed leadership were used (Amsalu & Belay, 2024; Lin, 2022):

- Descriptive statistics and reliability (Cronbach's α).
- Pearson correlations.
- Hierarchical regressions to control socioeconomic effects.
- Structural equation modeling (SEM) to test relationships between AIM, school climate, and academic achievement.

SEM was selected because of its ability to examine direct and indirect relationships, which is consistent with recent research exploring mediating effects of school climate (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).

3.6. Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis sought to understand the internal mechanisms of administrative integration. A deductive-inductive approach was followed, aligned with studies of professional communities and distributed leadership (Pinheiro & Matias Alves, 2024; Galdames-Calderón, 2023).

Steps

1. Open coding to identify units of meaning.
2. Axial coding to group categories.
3. Selective coding to generate main topics.
4. Triangulation with quantitative data.

3.7. Integration of Results (meta-inference)

A final meta-inference was elaborated articulating

- Quantitative standards,
- Qualitative narratives,
- Theory Reviewed.

This procedure responds to international recommendations for educational improvement studies that require combining statistical evidence with contextual interpretations (OECD, 2021).

4. RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in two large sections: quantitative findings and qualitative findings, followed by a mixed integration that gives empirical support to the Administrative Integration Model (AIM). The expansion incorporates descriptive values, statistical relationships, multivariate analysis and comparison between schools of different levels of integration.

4.1. Quantitative Results

4.1.1. Descriptive Statistics

The levels of Administrative Integration, School Climate and Academic Achievement were analyzed using average values and standard deviations. The results show significant variations between urban schools, consistent with recent research on institutional heterogeneity in urban contexts

(Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of the Main Variables.

VARIABLE	STOCKING	STANDARD DEVIATION	MINIMAL	MAXIMUM
ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION (IIA)	3.62	0.34	2.88	4.28
SCHOOL CLIMATE	3.78	0.29	3.15	4.35
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE (Z)	0.04	0.47	−0.81	1.12
SOCIOECONOMIC INDEX (ISE)	0.51	0.18	0.22	0.88

Schools with higher levels of administrative integration tended to show more favorable work climates and better results in Language and Mathematics, which coincides with recent models that indicate climate as a mediator between leadership and performance (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).

4.1.2. Correlations between AIM, School Climate, and Academic Achievement

The correlation matrix showed strong and significant relationships between the main variables, empirically supporting the AIM.

Table 8: Pearson Correlations between Variables.

VARIABLES	AII	SCHOOL CLIMATE	YIELD
AII	—	.71***	.53**
SCHOOL CLIMATE	.71***	—	.60**
YIELD	.53**	.60**	—
*P < .05; **P < .01; **P < .001			

The results confirm three patterns already reported in current research

1. School climate is strongly determined by administrative conditions (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).
2. Administrative integration is directly and indirectly related to academic results.
3. School climate significantly influences performance in urban contexts (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).

4.1.3. Hierarchical Regression

The predictive power of IIA on academic performance was tested, controlling for the Socioeconomic Index (ISE), following contemporary models of school effectiveness (Lin, 2022).

Table 9: Hierarchical Regression to Predict Academic Performance.

MODEL	VARIABLES INCLUDED	B	R^2	ΔR^2	SIGNIFICANCE
MODEL 1	WHILE	.41	.17	—	p < .05
MODEL 2	ISE + AII	.29	.35	.18	p < .01
MODEL 3	ISE + AII + School Climate	.17	.49	.14	p < .01

The significant increase in R^2 in Model 3 evidences the mediating role of school climate, as Amsalu and Belay (2024) also concluded.

4.1.4. Analysis Using Structural Equations (SEM)

The structural model showed excellent fit

- $\chi^2/df = 2.12$
- CFI = .96
- RMSEA = .05
- SRMR = .04

Table 10: Standardized Effects

RELATION	B	SIGNIFICANCE
AIM → CLIMATE	.79	p < .001
CLIMATE → PERFORMANCE	.41	p < .01
AIM → PERFORMANCE	.29	p < .05
AIM → PERFORMANCE (INDIRECT)	.32	p < .01

The indirect effect reinforces the theoretical model where climate operates as a mediator between administrative integration and results (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).

4.1.5. Comparison between High and Low Integration Schools

Schools were grouped into three levels (high, medium, low) using IIA tertiles.

Key trends

- Schools with high integration have significantly better climates (d = 0.68).
- They obtain an average yield 0.72 z-points above those with low integration.
- They use institutional data almost three times as much.

These patterns coincide with recent evidence on the relationship between integrated governance and school effectiveness (OECD, 2021).

Table 11: Differences between Schools by Level of Administrative Integration.

GROUP	SCHOOL CLIMATE (AVERAGE)	PERFORMANCE (Z)	DATA USAGE (WEEKLY FREQUENCY)
HIGH INTEGRATION (N = 6)	4.05	0.41	3.2
HALF INTEGRATION (N = 6)	3.75	0.03	2.1
LOW INTEGRATION (N = 6)	3.53	–0.31	1.2

4.2. Qualitative Results

The thematic analysis generated three broad categories that explain how administrative integration manifests itself in urban environments.

4.2.1. Theme 1: Structural Coordination and Distributed Leadership

Directors and middle leaders indicated that distributed leadership allowed

- Streamline decisions,
- Reduce duplication of functions,
- Improve internal communication.

The findings support recent research linking distributed leadership with teacher cohesion and professionalism (Galdames-Calderón, 2023; Lin, 2022).

4.2.2. Topic 2: School Climate as an Institutional Indicator

Teachers pointed out that improvements in the climate were evidenced in

- More collaborative relationships,
- Safer environments,
- Clear academic expectations.

This is consistent with the literature that highlights climate as "the core of school improvement" (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).

4.2.3. Topic 3: Data as a Tool for Continuous Improvement

The schools with the highest integration described

- Weekly evidence-focused meetings,
- Individualized follow-up of students,
- Systematic curricular adjustments.

This practice is aligned with the global trend towards data-driven governance (OECD, 2021).

4.3. Mixed Integration of Results

The quantitative and qualitative results converge on three key statements

1. Administrative integration directly strengthens the school climate, which is consistent with recent evidence (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).
2. School climate is the main pathway through which AIM impacts academic performance, supported by structural mediation studies (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).
3. Schools with integrated administrative structures show collaborative practices and more intensive use of data, a trend recorded in effective urban education systems (OECD, 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study allow us to affirm that the Administrative Integration Model (AIM) constitutes a solid and pertinent framework to understand and improve the quality of education in urban school contexts, characterized by high social complexity, cultural diversity, and institutional fragmentation. The expanded conclusions are structured around five main contributions: theoretical, administrative, pedagogical, contextual and educational policy implications.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions: Administrative Integration as a Central Construct in Urban Environments

The findings confirm that administrative integration is a key determinant of school climate

and, therefore, of academic performance. This study provides recent empirical evidence that reinforces contemporary theoretical models that place school climate as a critical mediator between leadership, governance, and results (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).

Similarly, the dimensions of the AIM—integrated leadership, data use, institutional cohesion, and professional communities—coincide with previous findings that highlight the importance of distributed leadership and teacher collaboration in strengthening school systems (Lin, 2022; Galdames-Calderón, 2023). The present research expands on these approaches by integrating them into a comprehensive framework, specific to urban schools.

5.2. Administrative Contributions: Integration as a Structural Condition for Continuous Improvement

Quantitative and qualitative data indicate that schools with greater administrative integration have

- More coherent leadership structures,
- Evidence-based decision-making,
- Greater organizational efficiency,
- Formal inter-area coordination mechanisms.

These elements coincide with recent recommendations from international organizations on adaptive and resilient school governance (OECD, 2021).

A relevant finding is that schools with high AIM scores hold three times more data analysis meetings than schools with low integration, suggesting that evidence-based governance is a central component to sustaining institutional improvements. This pattern has also been documented in studies on school effectiveness and distributed leadership (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).

5.3. Pedagogical Contributions: The School Climate as a Result and at the Same Time a Driver of Improvement

It was confirmed that school climate not only improves as a result of administrative integration, but also acts as an engine that drives better learning, consistent with structural modeling results in recent studies (Amsalu & Belay, 2024).

Positive climate is associated with

- Relationships of trust,
- High academic expectations,
- Social-emotional safety,
- Stable teaching collaboration.

These elements coincide with contemporary models of effective schools that integrate administrative and pedagogical processes (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2025).

5.4. Contextual Contributions: The Relevance of Integration in Complex Urban Environments

Qualitative findings show that urban schools face unique challenges stemming from

- Educational mobility,
- Social inequality
- Fragmented programs,
- Institutional and community pressure.

In this context, administrative integration becomes a key mechanism for coping with fragmentation and generating institutional cohesion. Schools with high AIM were able to articulate internal and external actors—families, community services, municipal organizations—in a more coherent way than those with low integration, which coincides with international trends towards the creation of urban educational ecosystems (OECD, 2021).

5.5. Contributions to Education Policies: The Need for Integrated Models of School Governance

At the macro level, this study suggests that urban education policies should promote

- Distributed leadership training,
- Strengthening of inter-institutional support networks,
- Financing for collaborative structures,
- Institutional time for data analysis,
- Integrated monitoring systems.

Recent evidence suggests that the most resilient education systems are those that integrate levels of governance and promote collaborative, evidence-based practices (Lin, 2022; OECD, 2021).

Likewise, the results indicate that urban schools require differentiated policies that address their operational complexity, avoiding the implementation of isolated programs and promoting systemic school improvement approaches, a trend also identified by Delgado-Galindo et al. (2025).

5.6. Limitations of the Study

Among the main limitations are

- Sample size and scope, restricted to 18 schools in a single urban district.
- Cross-sectional nature of the quantitative analysis, which prevents establishing causality with total clarity.
- Dependence on self-reports in the climate and administrative integration scales.

However, these limitations are common in recent urban studies and can be addressed in future research through longitudinal or multisite designs (Pinheiro & Matias Alves, 2024).

5.7. Projections and Future Lines of Research

Future research could

- Apply the IYM in other urban or rural contexts,
- Develop longitudinal studies to measure changes over time,
- Include the perspective of students and families,
- Link the AIM to social-emotional and well-being outcomes,
- Evaluate the implementation of the AIM as an educational intervention.

Overall Conclusion In summary, this study provides solid evidence to affirm that administrative integration constitutes a strategic component to improve educational quality in urban school environments. The AIM offers a theoretical, operational, and empirical framework that integrates leadership, climate, collaboration, and data use into a coherent system aimed at strengthening learning and educational equity. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings supports the relevance of the model for highly complex contexts and positions it as a valuable tool for research, school management, and public policymaking.

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