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**Integrative Science Education and Teaching Activity Journal**

Journal homepage : <https://jurnal.iainponorogo.ac.id/index.php/insecta>

Article

## **Issues and Challenges of The Paraguayan Educational System's Management, Based on Capacities for The Secondary Level. A Comparative Case Study with The Curriculum of Quebec**

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### **Article Info**

Article history:

Received: March 17, 2022

Accepted: April 22, 2022

Published: May 30, 2022

### **Keywords:**

Management;  
Educational system;  
Curriculum;

### **ABSTRACT**

This study seeks to generate knowledge and scientific result based on a comparative case study of Canadian (Quebec) educational management for the improvement of the education quality in Paraguay. Also, this research will provide a basis for future studies that can aim at raising the quality of work with other countries to face educational projects in a short, medium and long term. It will provide data to the Government staff for making future decisions. This study is designed with respect to the qualitative research method, the theoretical research and comparative case study. The responses of the interview are essential to compare with the literature review and then make conclusions. These conclusions aim to show the possibility of implementing new strategies of educational management in Paraguay. In order to collect data two professionals in the field of education system from Paraguay and Canada (province of Quebec) will participate in this study by giving their knowledge, opinion and experiences applying a questionnaire. The overall finding of the study, based on these interviewee's experiences and the literature review, indicates that the educational management based on capacities improvement has a positive impact on society in terms of inculcating new abilities, knowledge, and values among students to face real needs and issues of the real life. In this respect, this paper provides beneficial information explaining that teachers' work, supported by an innovative, dynamic and participatory educational management, increases the quality of education of students

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The education that we have to deliver in this age of constant change requires different perspectives in order to fulfil the real necessities of today's students. Schools' roles must go beyond the simple transfer of knowledge, it must offer an education for life. According to Hashim et al (2021) mention that current education systems have respond to the multiple challenges of this society involved by the advance of technology. This globalized society

demands new processes, ideas and attitudes in order to face the urgent need for a different management of education for an education that is also different.

This study considers that the new Education Management based on competencies is an appropriate approach to face this new era of education. This approach could give deep changes and transformations at the different educational levels, and especially from the Ministry of Education. This institution needs to develop a new education for the entire population, especially of secondary school students who are about to start a professional career or working. Today, a better management of education is required to lead a more efficient educational organization in order to achieve new objectives of the society, which needs such considerable changes (Ibarrola, cited by Pozner, 2000, p. 25).

A good management implies many dimensions related to a meaningful learning, practice of values, active interactions, mental representations, and so on. Thus, a close relationship is established between education and management, according to the idea of Ibarrola. The effect of good management is reflected in the educational level of the students, since it is in each classroom and in each educational center where every attempt at educational improvement becomes a reality.

In the case of Paraguay, despite the government's efforts in recent years to improve the education system, the educational quality is still one of the worst in the region (ABC color news, 2019). According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2018, Paraguay is ranked 95th out of 140 countries that are part of the study. This is one of the great challenges of Paraguayan educational management, improving student learning outcomes.

Likewise, there are many other management problems to solve such as low investment in education, old and inappropriate buildings for classes, low quality of teacher training, insufficient resources allocated to education, precarious infrastructure in many institutions (most of them are located in the rural areas), and a few hours allocated to schools and high schools (only 4 hours a day for primary education and 5 hours for secondary education). However, this research considers these problems can be solved with an appropriate education management based on new capacities and a good leadership.

Therefore, it is urgent to review educational management in Paraguay and find new strategies to offer better service and education in general. For this to happen, the Ministry of Education must face the deficient communication that exists between the countless departments of this ministry that do not work under the same line and do not follow the same common objective neither. This situation is worse by having a centralized approach that makes the decisive power concentrated only in the capital of the country and the bureaucracy, as well. A new approach will improve the educational management in Paraguay. This approach should offer an education that can make students achieve the skills and abilities they need to adapt to this increasingly changing society.

Previous research has shown that the Education Management based on Capacities approach develops considerable changes and transformations at different levels. Education based on capacities has not only influence on the disciplinary developments, but also develops the training for quality work (Tobon, 2007). This implies reaching the solution of problems without the need to think and analyze deeply, in order to focus attention and memory into other activities. These principles applied to the sphere of Ministerial Management, would bring good results in the field of education in general.

This research also considers, based on previous findings provided by Venegas (2010) research, that a good capacity-based educational management is the key to generating a quality education that can improve, not only the academic performance of students, but also their ability to adapt to new realities of the current context.

Therefore, this research focuses on how to face the issues and challenges of the Paraguayan Educational System's Management, based on capacities for the Secondary level.

For this to happen, a comparative case study with the Curriculum of Quebec will be implemented to infer some positive strategies of this mentioned system.

## **METHODS**

This study is designed with respect to the qualitative research method, the theoretical research and comparative case study. Previous studies: There is not yet a comparative case study about the education system of Paraguay with the successful system of Canada. This research will set the stage for future studies and also will look for the best way to improve the education level in Paraguay.

In order to collect data two professionals in the field of education system from Paraguay and Canada (province of Quebec) will participate in this study by giving their knowledge, opinion and experiences applying a questionnaire.

The questionnaire has the following objectives:

1. To obtain the opinion of professionals in the field of education from both education system (Paraguay and Canada) about which strategies have to be implemented in Paraguay in order to improve the quality of education at the level of high school.

2. To get to know new theories related to the Management of Education based on Capacities.

3. To compare the opinions of the interviewees with the theories about education management improvement based on capacities.

All the data collected will be analyzed and systematized in a separated chapter. The responses of the interview are essential to compare with the literature review and then make conclusions. These conclusions aim to show the possibility of implementing new strategies of educational management in Paraguay.

The answers were categorized into three sections for a better understanding of the data. The categories are as follows: education management, Education based on Capacities implication, and implementation of new capacities in the education management process. The implications about time make this research limited in the study of a small group composed of two experienced professionals in the field of Education Management (Paraguay and Canada). The research area is also limited by the scope of Secondary level.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Today, the concept of education should be seen from an integrative perspective, which means including different fields of sciences such as administration, economics, policy management, pedagogy, psychology, among others. This integrative approach will allow education to develop all the potentialities of students, maintaining communication between various sectors of the educational community. The management of the educational system should no longer be an isolated phenomenon, but rather multidisciplinary. This is to say, education management should be seen from an integral perspective.

In this sense, Venegas, (2021) suggests that the education management for this new century should be conceived as a new paradigm that includes, among others, the following changes:

- From vertical management, with hierarchical organizational structures, to a lineal and participatory management.
- From management for others, to management with the actors of the education community.
- From management with emphasis on individual responsibility, to management based on the responsibility of teamwork.
- From management based on linear paradigms, to management based on non-linear paradigms.

- From a management focused only on the product, to an integral management based on processes and products, as well.
- From a programmatic management, to a contingency management.
- From a centralized management, to a decentralized and deconcentrated management with emphasis in the demand and needs of the educational community.
- From a reactive and local culture, to a proactive and international organizational culture.
- From administrative management only, to innovative and integrated planning.
- From authoritarian and technocratic management, to participatory and democratic management.
- From normative management, to situational management.
- From conventional management to strategic management.
- From management with an emphasis on control and the technical, to management with emphasis on commitment to goals and values.
- From management that encourages the control of power, to management that encourages the struggle for power.
- From technical training of personnel during certain periods, to a culture of continuous learning.
- From a management oriented only towards formal education, to a management that also includes, as an indispensable factor, non-formal education formal and informal, as well.

Finally, educational management should no longer develop in the way in which it has been implemented. There is an urgent necessity of big changes, innovation, dynamism and the involvement of other social actors in the educational phenomena. In other words, a simple adjustment in the educational system will not be enough to achieve the results that are expected in students in general, and especially the ones of the secondary school level, who have urgent need to develop new skills so that they are able to assimilate the challenges of today. That is the reason why it is important to know the social effects that educational management generate in students.

### **Background of the Interviewees**

To obtain the opinion and knowledge of professionals of the field of Education, from both Paraguay and Quebec's Ministry of Education, about today's Education Management implications. Experts' responses will provide some strategies that can be implemented in Paraguay to improve the quality of education, especially at the high school level. This is background of the interviewees.

#### **Professional A**

The first interviewee is a 35-year-old female teacher, who received basic training in Art. She is a teacher at a High-school in Quebec. She was also trained in Social Science and Languages later in her career. Currently, she is doing a Master's Degree Program in Education at the University of Quebec á Trois-Rivières.

She has been an Art teacher for more than 10 years. She said, "good educational management implies an approach student-based education as the center of the teaching-learning process, whether at the national, provincial or school level. Good educational management must always consider the needs and interests of students, beyond the general aspects of education."

The literature review supports this interview and the interviewee's experience and aims to show her point of view as a teacher who applies projects based on the real and current needs of students to face activities that can develop several capacities.

## Professional B

This unit analyzes the experiences, ideas, knowledge, and beliefs of an experienced educational expert with vast experience working at the Ministry of Education in Paraguay as an external consultant. The expert interviewed has a recognized trajectory in the field of educational management. This professional was graduated from a Ph.D. program in education in Spain. The experience of this interviewee is supported by more than 25 years of managing issues related to education and also being a professor at the National University of Buenos Aires.

### Summarized Content of the interview.

The following table shows a conscientious and precise summary of the main ideas of the participants. This analysis was made regarding the implication of the education management based on capacities implemented at secondary schools of both countries, Paraguay and Canada (province of Quebec). The interview questions are categorized into three sub-topics related to Education Management based on capacities implications, sociological effects of the education based on capacities on students of the High school level, and brief analysis of the education System of both Paraguay and Quebec Province.

**Table 1.** Summary of the participants' perception about the Education Management based on capacities and the social effects on students of secondary school levels.

Participants	Education Management based on capacities implications.	Sociological effects of the education based on capacities for students of secondary level.	A brief analysis of the education System in Paraguay- Quebec Province.
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Student-based approach.</li> <li>-Considering students' needs and interests.</li> <li>-Students as the center of the teaching-learning process.</li> <li>-Schools' freedom.</li> <li>-Flexibility of the Curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate understanding students.</li> <li>Open citizens.</li> <li>Critical thinking.</li> <li>Understanding of the world.</li> <li>Adaptable to changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Quebec Education system:</li> <li>- Understandable curriculum.</li> <li>- Flexible.</li> <li>- Decentralized approach.</li> <li>- Good teacher training is offered by universities.</li> <li>- Decentralized financial resources.</li> </ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student-centered process.</li> <li>Evaluation based on competencies, not on objectives.</li> <li>The teaching process is based on the project approach.</li> <li>Contextualize the learning process.</li> <li>Change the role of the teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students must solve real problems by acquiring new skills, knowledge, and attitudes at the end of high school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Education System in Paraguay is:</li> <li>-Bureaucratic.</li> <li>-Complex.</li> <li>-Technocratic.</li> <li>-Not efficient.</li> <li>-With many internal communication problems (there is no link between different levels).</li> <li>-Lack of human resources.</li> <li>-The Ministry of Education is organized by levels that do not work together or have any connection with each other.</li> <li>-Constant change of heads of work departments that affects good management.</li> <li>-Human resources of the MEC are insufficient to meet the demands at the national level.</li> </ul>

## Interviews Analysis

### 1) Education Management based on capacities implications.

This section analyzes the interviewees' knowledge and understanding of Educational Management based on capacities implications. It will also grasp specific types of values, knowledge, and behaviors that can be inculcated by using this approach. It can also be interesting to find out if education based on capacities gives students enough tools to face social needs and issues. Every section is analyzed considering the opinion, experience, and knowledge of these two participants: Interviewee A, a teacher with experience applying the Curriculum of the Quebec Province, and Interviewee B, an Educational Manager of the Ministry of Education of Paraguay.

About Education Management based on capacities implications:

Interviewee A said the following:

"I think good educational management implies the approach student-based education as the center of the teaching-learning process, whether at the national, provincial or school level. Good educational management must always consider the needs and interests of students, beyond the general aspects of the education."

Interviewee B said:

"The main implications of a good Educational Management should be to place the student at the center of the learning process. To teach and evaluate based on competencies and not objectives as it happens in Paraguay. Also implies working from the Project approach, by contextualizing the learning process as well."

### 2) Sociological effects of the education based on capacities for students of High school level.

About the sociological effects that education based on capacities generate on students of secondary level, interviewee A said the following:

"I believe that the great sociological impact that a competency-based education generates in secondary school is to educate more understanding and open citizens capable to develop critical thinking and understand the world in which they live adapting to changes.

In addition, they obtain abilities that allow them to choose useful information for life, (work or university studies). Also, schools educate students not for knowing many things, but knowing how to do a lot of things."

However:

"There are certain social issues generated in the high school student environment, such as drug consumption, and school dropout. To meet these challenges, the Quebec provincial government has programs like workshops that help young people to overcome these issues."

".... regarding school dropouts, and considering that education is compulsory until high school, local law guarantees the educational processes for all students, otherwise, parents are obliged to make their children attend schools or they must assume the legal consequences of such negligence."

Interviewee B said:

"It will be a good sociological effect if students by the end of high school level can solve real problems as an effect of acquiring new skills, knowledge, and attitudes at schools".

### 3) Brief analysis of the education System in Paraguay-Quebec Province.

About the Quebec education system, participant A said the following:

"In my opinion, the Quebec Education System has the following strengths: an understandable curriculum, teachers can prioritize their content according to the needs and interests of the students, under the concept of decentralization, a good teacher training offered at the universities, and a decentralized financial resource at school level."

Despite the benefits of Education in the Province of Quebec, we must also consider that some weaknesses should be mentioned in this research. Interviewee A has said that

sometimes interinstitutional works are difficult to manage, especially with those related to justice, where their interventions are slow or not efficient.

On other hand, interviewee B said:

“Educational management system in Paraguay is very complex since the Ministry of Education is a very bureaucratic, conservative, and centralized institution, organized by departments without dialogue among each other (...)

There is political control about the workers, whose positions depend on political decisions which makes the management difficult... the human resources of the MEC are insufficient to meet the demands at the national level.

...despite the fact that the Government started to decentralize education in Paraguay, the management at the Departmental level still reproduces the central scheme of work.”

### **Analysis of the Findings**

This section summarizes findings and contributions made by this research in terms of knowledge about good management of education implications, and the social effects of the capacities approach in the educational field. This analysis found evidence based on the experiences, ideas, thoughts, and beliefs of the interviewees about the topic under study divided into three following sub-topics:

Education Management based on capacities implications: both interviewees agreed that good educational management should develop a student-centered approach considering students' needs and interests in the learning process. Also, they consider that the education system should have a more flexible Curriculum by giving schools enough freedom to adapt the national program to the context of students.

About the sociological effects of education based on capacities, participants consider the following ideas: the secondary students' social behavior is strongly influenced by competencies that the education system can offer them. Also, by inculcating new competencies it is possible to educate more understanding, critical, and open students. This new approach can build a more competitive society by inculcating abilities to solve real problems, new skills, knowledge, and attitudes to face the worldwide challenges to students at the end of high school.

Finally, a brief analysis of the education system of both Paraguay and Quebec Province can be drawn from the interviews as follows:

According to interviewee A, the Quebec Education system has an understandable, new, and flexible curriculum. She also said that good teacher training is offered by provincial universities specialized in education. She added that currently, the decentralized financial resources make it possible to solve all local needs related to schools' resources.

On other hand -The Education System in Paraguay is defined by interviewee B as bureaucratic, complex, technocratic, not inefficient, with not enough spatialized human resources, and with many internal communication problems among departments. She also said that constant change of heads of different departments affects educational management.

### **Discussion of interview results**

The result of this study indicates that good Management involves many processes and steps that must be considered when creating educational policies and, above all, when implementing them. In this sense, the first thing to be considered is the student as the center of the learning process, taking into account their interests, needs, and motivations. It is also important to consider many factors related to the teachers' work and the number of students per class and the continuity of teaching the same group over several years by considering capacities development which does not occur in a short time, this can even take several years.

As the classroom is where learning takes place, the mentioned factors have a strong influence on the achievement of capacities.

These interviewees' experiences show that the approach under study is effective because it has a student-based focus, considers students' needs and interests, and makes the learning process more meaningful. Results also consider educational management should be supported by flexibility and the schools' freedom, as in the case of the Curriculum of Quebec. This flexibility makes the curriculum adaptable to the real context of each student and they can achieve a better role in society.

These results are supported by the interviewees' experiences and demonstrate that educational management based on capacities helps educators discover various skills and inculcate values among students beyond the cognitive processes only. Those values acquired in schools allow students to practice them in their daily life outside the classroom, generating an impact on society with their positive or negative behaviors. In other words, the type of society that is expected to be built is designed in the classrooms.

Interviewees also show evidence that educating students by developing new capacities for their real-life will also develop values such as tolerance, empathy, respect, and others which are considered the base of a more peaceful society.

## CONCLUSION

The overall finding of the study, based on these interviewee's experiences and the literature review, indicates that the educational management based on capacities improvement has a positive impact on society in terms of inculcating new abilities, knowledge, and values among students to face real needs and issues of the real life. In this respect, this paper provides beneficial information explaining that teachers' work, supported by an innovative, dynamic and participatory educational management, increases the quality of education of students. The mentioned idea is supported by the experiences of an interviewee who expressed this idea based on her own experiences.

A participant of this research with vast experience in the field of secondary education expresses that the society we want to build begins in the classrooms. The more capacities students develop, the better society will be built. That is why the promotion of values, attitudes, and knowledge in the training of students has a big effect on society. According to the interviewees' experiences, by developing new capacities students will also develop important values considered the base of a more peaceful society. For this reason, the concept of capacity should not only be understood as knowledge acquired in the context of current educational management.

Under the results obtained from the study, the approach under study is effective. Therefore, some suggestions are given. The education system in Paraguay should have a more student-based focus, considering students' needs and interests, and making the learning process more meaningful. Also, educational management should be supported by decentralization, flexibility, and schools' freedom, to make the curriculum more adaptable to the real context of each student and consequently have a better role in society.

The Ministry of Education's work in Paraguay should be less bureaucratic, complex, and technocratic to offer a more efficient education. Also, it is necessary to establish politics for better internal communication among departments. By reducing constant changes in staff is possible to have more efficient educational management.

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