

Principal Leadership in the Resignification of the Institutional Educational Project Toward Intercultural Education: A Systematic Literature Review

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This reflective article analyzes theoretical contributions on culture, interculturality, and intercultural education, with the aim

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of establishing conceptual elements for understanding their incorporation into the Institutional Educational Project (PEI). A qualitative documentary review was conducted following PRISMA 2020, based on a corpus of 30 articles published between 2020 and 2026 and selected through the phases of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The thematic analysis yielded five interpretive categories: school culture; interculturality; curriculum and PEI; inclusion and coexistence; and ancestral knowledge and territory. The findings reveal that, although the literature widely acknowledges cultural diversity, there remains a weak explicit articulation between intercultural education and the PEI. They also show that interculturality goes beyond the recognition of difference and requires transforming the ways in which knowledge is legitimized, the curriculum is organized, coexistence is fostered, communities are engaged, and institutional decisions are guided. It is concluded that the PEI can serve as an integrating framework for intercultural education when it incorporates cultural diversity and community knowledge into curricular, pedagogical, coexistence-related, and institutional management, thereby fostering their recognition as a principle of epistemic and social justice.

Keywords: intercultural education, school culture, educational project, curriculum.

Introduction

The school not only teaches content; it also defines relationships, common senses and knowledge that can be recognized or left out. It is in the curriculum, in coexistence, in listening to families and in the real participation of students from their own stories. In this sense, the Institutional Educational Project (PEI) can be read as something more than a planning document, because it allows us to ask how the institution understands its social, economic and cultural context (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 1994; Ministry of National Education [MEN], 1994).

In this process, the rector plays a decisive role, as he is the one who leads the institutional

reading of the context and translates this recognition into strategic decisions that guide the course of the Institutional Educational Project. Its management is not limited to administrative functions, but implies an exercise of leadership capable of articulating the institutional vision with the curricular, pedagogical and convivial needs that a culturally diverse context demands. From this perspective, the resignification of the IEP depends, to a large extent, on the rector's ability to mobilize the educational community towards a shared understanding of interculturality as a strategic principle of institutional management, and not as a discursive statement devoid of practical consequences.

A necessary question then arises: How can intercultural education transcend the

recognition of diversity and become a principle that guides the curricular, pedagogical, coexistence, and community decisions of the IEP? In school discourse, interculturality is usually accepted, but it does not always reach pedagogical decisions. In this sense, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2006) states that it should be based on the recognition of students' cultural identities, on the promotion of shared knowledge, and on the possibility of using models of democratic coexistence. However, this requires looking at the daily life of the school, since interculturality also implies recognizing practices and meanings that go beyond the learning of a language (Flórez et al., 2022).

This tension between discursive recognition and the effective transformation of institutional practices poses a challenge directly related to managerial leadership. A rector who assumes the strategic management of the IEP from an intercultural perspective must identify the barriers that prevent diversity from being translated into concrete curricular and pedagogical decisions, and guide his teaching and management team towards the construction of institutional agreements that incorporate it effectively. In this sense, the rector's leadership becomes a critical factor in bridging the gap between the institutional declaration of intercultural principles and their concretization in the daily life of the school.

In accordance with the above, it can be considered that the problem arises when diversity is recognized, but this does not translate into a pedagogical experience. Indigenous, Afro-descendant, migrant, rural, and urban students can converge in the same institution; however, the school can continue to operate from homogenizing schemes, based on a single conception of student, knowledge, and academic success. This tension is especially visible in students belonging to ethnic and minority communities schooled outside their territories of origin, for whom inclusion also implies preserving links with language, culture, and a

sense of community belonging (Rangel et al., 2023). In this context, the IEP plays a fundamental role, as it can become the instrument that translates the recognition of diversity into concrete curricular, pedagogical, and convivial decisions, incorporating the identities, knowledge, and sociocultural particularities of students in the construction of the common educational project.

In this sense, the rector, as the strategic leader of the educational institution that aspires to the fulfillment of the aims of education, must recognize the social, cultural, and territorial conditions of his context and articulate them with decisions related to the curriculum, coexistence, and community engagement (Ministry of National Education [MEN], 1994). In this articulation, **the** curriculum occupies a central place, since it cannot be reduced to a sequence of contents; it also constitutes a space in which it is defined what knowledge is legitimized, what experiences are incorporated into the classroom, and what identities and ways of understanding the world are recognized within the school. From this perspective, intercultural education transcends the curricular dimension and is also expressed in the relationships that are built between students, teachers, families, and communities. An institution can declare principles of inclusion and recognition of diversity and, simultaneously, reproduce practices of discrimination, exclusion, or unequal treatment. Therefore, the presence of culturally diverse groups in the classroom does not in itself guarantee an intercultural educational experience; pedagogical and institutional conditions are required to enable their participation, recognition, and expression without difference becoming a reason for exclusion (Coronado et al., 2021). In this framework, pedagogical strategies such as playfulness show that coexistence and the reduction of discriminatory practices can be addressed through intentional and contextualized educational actions (Carrascal et al., 2022).

According to the above, community and ancestral knowledge constitute a fundamental

component for articulating intercultural education with the IEP, insofar as it allows the recognition of knowledge, memories, and practices historically constructed in the territories. When the school exclusively legitimizes schooled knowledge, it runs the risk of making invisible other ways of understanding the world, as well as environmental, cultural, and community practices that are part of the students' identity. In this sense, for example, the ancestral knowledge of the Zenú people shows that community knowledge can be integrated into training processes not as an accessory or folkloric element, but as a legitimate source of learning and knowledge construction (Morales-Pérez et al., 2023). Similarly, ethnomathematics shows that even fields of knowledge traditionally considered universal can establish dialogues with culturally situated practices and knowledge (Álvarez et al., 2020). This openness to the plurality of knowledge allows us to understand that inclusion and interculturality, although conceptually different, find a point of convergence in the recognition and effective participation of diversity within the school.

From this perspective, inclusion cannot be reduced to the access or permanence of diverse students in the education system, but requires identifying and transforming the barriers that limit their participation and recognition. Although inclusion and interculturality respond to different conceptual developments, both demand that the institution examine the conditions that can generate inequality, exclusion, or invisibilization of certain students and communities. Studies on inclusive education developed in the context of the pandemic showed that educational inequalities can deepen when institutional responses ignore the social, technological, and family conditions of students (Cruz & Hernández, 2022). In addition to these structural barriers, there are attitudinal barriers, since teachers' beliefs, dispositions, and forms of pedagogical relationships also have an impact on the construction of inclusive educational practices (Tello & Uribe, 2025). Therefore, an

intercultural perspective incorporated into the IEP requires not only recognizing the existence of diversity, but also generating institutional, curricular, and pedagogical conditions that guarantee their participation and legitimize the different forms of knowledge present in the educational community.

Taking into account the above, it is pertinent to review the academic contributions that have addressed culture, interculturality, curriculum, inclusion, coexistence and community knowledge, in order to identify their possible articulations with the Institutional Educational Project. Although these dimensions have been widely studied, their relationship with the IEP is not always presented in an explicit or integrated way, which raises the need to move towards an understanding that allows linking intercultural education with the decisions that guide institutional life. In this sense, the review does not intend to carry out a descriptive accumulation of antecedents, but to identify relationships, tensions and theoretical elements that allow us to understand how interculturality can transcend the discursive recognition of diversity and be projected towards the curriculum, pedagogical practices, coexistence and the school-community relationship. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the theoretical contributions on managerial leadership, strategic management and intercultural education, in order to establish conceptual elements that allow understanding the role of the rector in the resignification of the Institutional Educational Project.

Methodology

The study was developed through a documentary review with a qualitative approach, aimed at interpreting academic contributions related to culture, interculturality, intercultural education, and the Institutional Educational Project (PEI), with the purpose of identifying conceptual relationships and categories of analysis, rather than measuring effects or establishing associations between variables

(Bowen, 2009; Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018). To ensure greater transparency and traceability in the document selection, the process was organized following the guidelines of **PRISMA 2020**, through the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion phases (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021).

In the identification phase, the documentary search was carried out in the Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO and Redalyc databases, complemented with **Google Scholar** as an academic search engine. Articles published between 2020 and 2026 were considered and descriptors in Spanish and English related to *intercultural education, interculturality/interculturality, school culture/school culture, curriculum/inclusion/inclusion, school coexistence, ancestral knowledge/ancestral knowledge, cultural diversity/Institutional Educational Project/Institutional Educational Project/Institutional Educational Project/school leadership, strategic management and institutional decision-making/institutional decision-making*. The terms were combined using the Boolean operators **AND** and **OR**, adjusting the equations to the characteristics of each information source.

The following combination was used as a guiding equation for the search: ("intercultural education" OR "intercultural education") AND ("school culture" OR "school culture") AND ("curriculum" OR "curriculum"). This equation was complemented with combinations that incorporated terms such as *IEP, inclusion, school coexistence, cultural diversity, ancestral knowledge, managerial leadership, strategic management, and territory*, with the purpose of expanding the recovery of studies related to the different dimensions of the problem. The search was temporally limited to the period 197-212 and academic publications with DOI and thematic correspondence with the object of study were prioritized. The application of these parameters made it possible to form an initial set of 31 potentially relevant records. Consequently, this figure does not correspond to the totality of documents retrieved through general searches in

the different sources, but to the records that, after applying the established temporal, documentary and thematic delimitations, presented preliminary correspondence for the purpose of the review. In this way, the subsequent screening phase was carried out on a corpus previously delimited by relevance criteria.

During the screening phase, the existence of duplicates was verified and the titles, abstracts, keywords, and editorial data of the 31 pre-selected records were reviewed. No duplicate documents were identified. Subsequently, the correspondence of each publication with the conceptual nuclei of the study was examined: school culture, interculturality, curriculum, inclusion, coexistence, ancestral knowledge, and school-community relationship. As a result, one record was excluded because its object of study had an indirect relationship with intercultural education and did not provide sufficient elements to analyze its articulation with the IEP, so 30 documents advanced to the full-text review.

In the eligibility phase, the 30 articles were read in their entirety and the previously defined inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Articles published between 2020 and 2026, with DOI and thematically linked to culture, interculturality, intercultural education, curriculum, inclusion, coexistence, ancestral knowledge, cultural diversity, teacher training, territory or institutional processes related to the IEP were excluded. Those documents whose subject matter did not contribute conceptual elements to the research problem or whose relationship with intercultural education and institutional dynamics was insufficient were excluded. After this procedure, the 30 articles met the eligibility criteria and formed the final corpus of analysis (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021).

Finally, in the inclusion phase, the selected articles were organized in an extraction matrix that included the fields of author, year, title, DOI, central theme, and theoretical contribution. Subsequently, the information was subjected to a thematic analysis aimed at

identifying recurrences, relationships, and nuclei of meaning between the studies. This process made it possible to recognize different approaches to intercultural education associated with ancestral knowledge and territory, school coexistence, inclusion, curriculum, teacher training, and institutional management. Based on the comparative and cross-sectional reading of

the corpus, progress was made towards the construction of interpretative categories that allowed us to understand intercultural education in the PEI as an articulating dimension of the curricular, pedagogical, convivial, community, and institutional components, and not as an isolated element

Table 1. Document selection route according to PRISMA

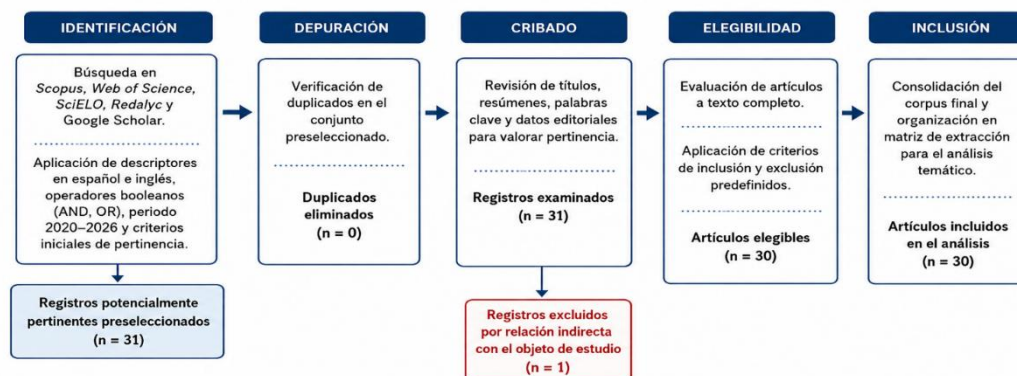
Phase	Procedure performed	Result
Identification	Search in Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO and Redalyc, complemented with Google Scholar. Spanish and English 31 descriptors were used combined using the Boolean operators AND and OR, with time delimitation between 2020 and 2026 records and initial criteria of thematic relevance.	pre-selected relevant
Debugging	Verification of duplicate records within the pre-selected document set.	0 duplicate records
Screening	Review of titles, abstracts, keywords and editorial data to 31 records examined; 1 determine their correspondence with school culture, excluded due to indirect interculturality, curriculum, inclusion, coexistence, ancestral relationship with the knowledge and school-community relationship.	object of study
Eligibility	Full-text reading of the selected documents and application of 30 items evaluated and the previously established inclusion and exclusion criteria.	eligible
Inclusion	Consolidation of the definitive corpus and organization of the 30 articles included in the articles in the extraction matrix for subsequent thematic analysis.	analysis

Note. Authors' elaboration (2026).

Figure 1. Document selection route according to PRISMA.

Figura 1.

Ruta de selección documental según PRISMA 2020.



Nota. Los 31 registros corresponden al conjunto documental preseleccionado después de aplicar delimitaciones temporales, temáticas y documentales a los resultados recuperados en las fuentes consultadas. Elaboración propia (2026), con base en PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021).

Note. Own elaboration (2026). In the original Spanish

Once the documentary corpus was defined, the thematic analysis of the 30 selected articles was carried out, taking as references the contributions of content analysis and thematic analysis (Bardin, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process was aimed at identifying recurrent patterns, nuclei of meaning, convergences, tensions and conceptual relationships between the studies, overcoming an exclusively descriptive reading of the literature. To this end, an individual reading of the articles and the identification of thematic units linked to the object of study were initially carried out; subsequently, these units were compared and grouped according to their conceptual affinities and their contribution to the understanding of

intercultural education in the PEI. As a result of this process, five interpretative categories emerged: school culture; interculturality; curriculum and IEP; inclusion and coexistence; and ancestral knowledge and territory. These categories made it possible to organize the findings transversally, contrast the contributions of the studies, and identify relationships between the different dimensions analyzed. Finally, the cross-sectional interpretation made it possible to establish theoretical connections between the categories and to understand intercultural education not as an isolated component, but as a perspective that could be articulated with the curricular, pedagogical, coexistence, community, and institutional dimensions of the IEP.

Table 2. Corpus analysis categories

Category	Meaning within the review
School culture	It allows us to understand how the school produces meanings, practices, norms and forms of relationship.
Interculturality	It helps to analyse recognition, dialogue and tensions between cultures in the educational space.
Curriculum & IEP	It relates school knowledge to institutional and pedagogical decisions.
Inclusion and coexistence	It allows for the review of barriers, participation, discrimination and forms of school relationships.
Ancestral knowledge and territory	Recognizes community knowledge, cultural memory, and school-community link.

Note. Own elaboration (2026)

Results

The findings derived from the analysis of the corpus show that intercultural education constitutes a transversal dimension of school life, the understanding of which implies establishing relationships between school culture, the curriculum, inclusion and coexistence, ancestral and territorial knowledge, and the institutional decisions that make up the Institutional Educational Project. Although these dimensions can be approached in a differentiated way, the

thematic analysis shows interdependent relationships, particularly around the recognition of diversity, the legitimization of knowledge, the participation of communities and the transformation of educational practices. In this sense, one of the main findings lies in the tension between the discursive recognition of diversity and its effective incorporation into curricular, pedagogical, convivial, and institutional practices. Based on this relationship, the results are organized in Table 3, which synthesizes the main findings of the corpus and the inferences derived

from its analysis to understand the incorporation of intercultural education in the IEP.

Table 3.

Synthesis of findings by thematic axes

Thematic axis	Authors	Main findings	Argumentative inferences
School culture and the construction of educational meaning	Córdoba (2020); Coronado et al. (2021); Carrascal et al. (2022); Blanco et al. (2022); Hernández et al. (2023); Vallejo and Pirela (2023); Lira et al. (2024); Núñez et al. (2024); Cifuentes and Marín (2024); Herrera and Ochoa (2022); Botello et al. (2025)	School culture is expressed in daily practices, coexistence, participation, institutional communication, the understood as the starting point of intercultural curriculum and the relationship with the context. Studies show that school not only teaches produces meanings about who content, but also produces learns, what knowledge forms of relationship, senses of matters, and how it is lived citizenship, circulation of together, then the IEP should knowledge and ways of not limit itself to declaring recognizing or excluding institutional values. It should difference. The cultural and critically read the cultures that intercultural approach in already circulate in the education is based on the institution and the tensions proposition that active contact that run through them, while with different cultural supporting the legitimization frameworks fosters and of the voice and active enhances academic participation of students by development by being adapted guaranteeing a dialogue about and immersed in the reflective the existing cultural diversity understanding of different contexts	School culture can be understood as the starting point of intercultural education. If the school produces meanings about who learns, what knowledge forms of relationship, senses of matters, and how it is lived together, then the IEP should not limit itself to declaring institutional values. It should critically read the cultures that already circulate in the institution and the tensions that run through them, while supporting the legitimization of the voice and active participation of students by being adapted to the existing cultural diversity and immersed in the reflective understanding of different contexts
	Ramirez Valencia and Bustamante (2020); Susinos Rada and Rodriguez Hoyos (2022)	Interculturality is not limited to the general recognition of diversity. The articles show that it involves dialogue, pedagogical mediation, Interculturality requires revision of cultural hierarchies, moving from discourse to recognition of languages, concrete conditions of identities and historical participation. It is not enough experiences. They also show to accept that there are diverse tensions: formal inclusion students. The school must ask without cultural recognition, itself if its practices really subordination of knowledge, modify the relationship with discrimination or unilateral difference or if they only name adaptation of the student to it. In this sense, an intercultural IEP should and worldviews is necessary, organize routes for the however, in order to enable dialogue of knowledge, the active dialogue on recognition and prevention of interculturality, interpersonal exclusions. encounter is vital where each individual shares their experiences and needs according to their context,	Interculturality requires revision of cultural hierarchies, moving from discourse to recognition of languages, concrete conditions of identities and historical participation. It is not enough experiences. They also show to accept that there are diverse tensions: formal inclusion students. The school must ask without cultural recognition, itself if its practices really subordination of knowledge, modify the relationship with discrimination or unilateral difference or if they only name adaptation of the student to it. In this sense, an intercultural IEP should and worldviews is necessary, organize routes for the however, in order to enable dialogue of knowledge, the active dialogue on recognition and prevention of interculturality, interpersonal exclusions. encounter is vital where each individual shares their experiences and needs according to their context,
Interculturality: recognition, dialogue and tension	Córdoba (2020); Véllez et al. (2021); Coronado et al. (2021); Lohndorf (2022); Flores et al. (2022); Evans (2023); Rangel et al. (2023); Fornet – Betancourt, Tubino (2022)		

Thematic axis	Authors	Main findings	Argumentative inferences
		allowing critical reflections on the recognition of different communities.	
Intercultural education and curriculum	Álvarez et al. (2020); Casella and Bozo (2021); Blanco et al. (2022); Morales et al. (2023); Quilindo (2023); Núñez et al. (2024); Cifuentes and Marín (2024); Salcedo et al. (2025); Moreno and Calle (2025); Krainer and Chaves (2021); Agualongo (2025)	The curriculum appears as a decisive space to materialize intercultural education. Studies show that it not only organizes subjects or contents, but also defines what knowledge is valid, what experiences enter the classroom and what relationship exists between school, territory, citizenship, technology and learning. The predominant academic contents are not those of intercultural knowledge, which causes gaps in teacher training and in the educational experience of students, hence the need to make adaptations to a curriculum integrated by knowledge and worldviews of different communities and cultures	An intercultural curriculum does not consist of adding activities on diversity. It requires reviewing how it is taught, from where it is taught, and what knowledge is legitimized. For this reason, the IEP can function as a guide to integrate school knowledge, community knowledge, citizenship training, and situated pedagogical practices.
Inclusion, coexistence and diversity in school	Coronado et al. (2021); Ruíz and Gómez (2021); Carrascal et al. (2022); Cruz and Hernández (2022); Evans (2023); Cifuentes et al. (2021); Lira et al. (2024); Tello et al. (2025); Quiroz and Casal (2025); Zambrano Muñoz (2026)	The articles show that inclusion is not reduced to access to school or coexistence to be articulated with inclusive compliance with rules. and convivial practices. If the Cultural diversity can difference does not find real strengthen school conditions for participation, it relationships, but it can also be can become a reason for crossed by discrimination, exclusion. For this reason, the barriers, intimidation or lack of IEP must guide pedagogical, recognition. In addition, training and community teaching attitudes, family actions that make coexistence orientation and school an experience of recognition permanence influence the and not just a normative educational experience. The requirement. Focusing on a possibility of making an broader view of the abilities institutional change on these and diversities of the student redundant barriers such as body will make it possible to attitudinal and institutional adjust normalized dynamics barriers in school contexts will that enable segregation within generate decisive the classroom and limit the transformations that allow methodologies that guarantee integration to be changed for global participation. inclusion, ensuring that all	

Thematic axis	Authors	Main findings	Argumentative inferences
		students participate on equal terms.	.
Ancestral knowledge, territory and community	Álvarez et al. (2020); Casella and Bozo (2021); García (2021); Vélez et al. (2021); Ruíz and Gómez (2021); Morales et al. (2023); Rangel et al. (2023); Núñez et al. (2024); Salcedo et al. (2025); Cantero and Hernández (2020); Triana Casallas and Perez Arteaga (2020)	Studies show that ancestral and community knowledge can enrich the curriculum, environmental culture, territorial identity, citizenship and the school-family relationship. They also show that education cannot form with its back turned to the geographical space, but also that it circulates outside the classroom. The IEP should be an open space for the community to participate in everyday life, linking the construction of the ancestral and traditional educational project. Not as a cultural ornament, but as a process that allows us to preserve legitimate source of knowledge and identity and preserve identity and ancestral school meaning.	A situated intercultural education can become a real scenario for the materialization of intercultural education, as long as it is not treated as a general phrase. Interculturality should function as a living principle of institutional decision-making. If diversity is recognized, but coherence between mission, the curriculum, coexistence vision, curriculum, teaching and community participation practices, coexistence, are not transformed, the IEP management and relationship remains incomplete.
Theoretical Approach to Intercultural Education in the PEI	Córdoba (2020); Casella and Bozo (2021); Blanco et al. (2022); Florez et al. (2022); Morales et al. (2023); Coronado et al. (2021); Tello et al. (2025); Herrera and Ochoa (2022); Moreno and Calle (2025); Botello et al. (2025); Valbuena et al. (2024)	The findings allow us to propose that intercultural education in the PEI is organized into identity, curricular, pedagogical, education, as long as it is not community, treated as a general phrase. Interculturality should function as a living principle of institutional decision-making. These components show that institutional decision-making needs. If diversity is recognized, but coherence between mission, the curriculum, coexistence vision, curriculum, teaching and community participation practices, coexistence, are not transformed, the IEP management and relationship remains incomplete.	The IEP can become a real scenario for the materialization of intercultural education, as long as it is not treated as a general phrase. Interculturality should function as a living principle of institutional decision-making. These components show that institutional decision-making needs. If diversity is recognized, but coherence between mission, the curriculum, coexistence vision, curriculum, teaching and community participation practices, coexistence, are not transformed, the IEP management and relationship remains incomplete.

Note. Own elaboration (2026)

A comparative reading of the findings shows that intercultural education transcends the recognition of the coexistence of diverse cultures in the school space. Although this recognition constitutes a starting point, it is insufficient when it does not translate into transformations in teaching, coexistence, evaluation, and

institutional decision-making practices. In this sense, one of the main tensions identified in the corpus is between the discursive recognition of diversity and its materialization in the educational experience, since the school can formally recognize cultural heterogeneity and, simultaneously, continue to operate from

homogeneous conceptions of student, knowledge, and school success. Coronado et al. (2021) show the relationship between multicultural experience and school coexistence, while Flórez et al. (2022) situate interculturality in the processes of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Taken together, these contributions allow us to infer that interculturality acquires meaning when the recognition of diversity is concretized in pedagogical practices and in the daily relationships through which cultural identities can be recognized, expressed, and legitimized.

This tension acquires special relevance in the curriculum, understood not only as an organization of contents, but as a space in which relationships are established between school knowledge, context, and social experience. Blanco et al. (2022) propose transversality as a mediation between curricular praxis and the social context, while Casella and Bozo (2021) link curriculum design with quality and equity in Afro-descendant contexts. The articulated reading of these studies allows us to understand that an interculturally oriented curriculum requires overcoming the episodic incorporation of content associated with diversity and moving towards the recognition of the identities, experiences, and sociocultural contexts from which learning is constructed. The curricular question refers, therefore, not only to what is taught, but also to what knowledge is legitimized, which remains on the margins, and which actors participate in its construction.

In this discussion, ancestral and community knowledge acquire special relevance. Morales et al. (2023) show the possibilities of articulating Zenú ancestral knowledge with the curriculum to strengthen environmental culture, while Álvarez et al. (2020), from ethnomathematics, show that fields of knowledge traditionally considered universal can establish relationships with culturally situated practices. These findings allow us to recognize the formative potential of community knowledge and question its incorporation as merely

complementary or folkloric elements within the curriculum. Along the same lines, García (2021) introduces the need to decolonize teaching knowledge, which broadens the discussion from the contents to the conceptions that sustain pedagogical practice. The incorporation of culturally diverse knowledge is limited if hierarchies persist that attribute legitimacy exclusively to schooled knowledge. In this way, an intercultural perspective implies not only diversifying content, but also reviewing the criteria by which the school recognizes, validates, and puts into dialogue different forms of knowledge.

The findings also allow us to establish a close, although conceptually differentiated, relationship between inclusion, coexistence, and interculturality. Cruz and Hernández (2022) show how educational inequalities deepened during the pandemic when family, social, and technological conditions limited student participation. For their part, Tello and Uribe (2025) focus their analysis on teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Reading both contributions together, we can distinguish between structural barriers and attitudinal barriers: the former associated with the conditions that enable access and participation, and the latter related to beliefs, dispositions, and forms of pedagogical interaction. This distinction is relevant for intercultural education, since cultural recognition requires both institutional conditions of participation and educational practices capable of questioning prejudices, discrimination, and forms of exclusion.

The tension between schooling and cultural inclusion is particularly visible in studies related to indigenous peoples, migration, and cultural diversity. Rangel et al. (2023) show that the schooling of Rarámuri children outside their communities does not in itself guarantee their cultural inclusion; Lohndorf (2022) analyzes the limitations associated with addressing diversity and inclusion in biethnic preschool classrooms; and Evans (2023) evidences situations of bullying and exclusion that can affect immigrant students

when there are no adequate support strategies. These findings allow us to establish a fundamental distinction: access to the educational institution does not necessarily equate to the recognition of cultural identity. Intercultural inclusion also involves generating conditions for students' language, memory, experiences, and cultural references to find legitimate spaces for participation in school life.

From this perspective, the dialogue of knowledge requires mechanisms that allow cultural recognition to be transferred to institutional organization. Vélez et al. (2021) provide elements related to intercultural management methodologies and processes, while Valbuena et al. (2024) highlight the importance of the collective construction of knowledge and learning communities. Although these studies are developed in different areas, their reading in relation to the problem analyzed allows us to infer that interculturality requires institutional structures that favor participation, dialogue, collective construction, and continuity of actions. Without these conditions, there is a risk that interculturality will remain an institutional statement without sufficient impact on school practices.

At this point, the Institutional Educational Project acquires relevance as a possible articulating device, as it allows the relationship between school culture, curriculum, pedagogical practices, inclusion and coexistence, ancestral knowledge, territory and community participation. However, the analysis of the corpus shows that these dimensions are usually studied in a particular way and that their explicit articulation with the IEP continues to be limited. This gap allows us to raise the need for the rector to advance, from his role of strategic management, towards an understanding of the IEP in which interculturality operates as a transversal criterion to guide curricular, pedagogical, convivial, community and institutional decisions.

Finally, Herrera and Ochoa (2022), Moreno and Calle (2025) and Botello et al. (2025) allow technological mediations to be incorporated as a dimension of contemporary school culture. Their inclusion broadens the discussion by showing that access to knowledge and forms of participation are also mediated by technologies and by the conditions in which they are appropriated. From this perspective, the IEP can favor the articulation between institutional identity, curriculum, pedagogical practices, coexistence, community participation, technology, and school management. Thus, the rector's main challenge lies not only in recognizing that diversity exists, but in leading the generation of institutional conditions so that it effectively influences the construction of the common educational project.

In accordance with the above, the findings show that the categories analyzed do not operate in isolation, but rather configure a network of interdependent relationships to understand intercultural education in the school context. School culture constitutes the scenario in which meanings, practices, and forms of relationship are produced and reproduced; interculturality makes it possible to problematize the tensions associated with the recognition of diversity; the curriculum defines what knowledge, experiences, and knowledge acquire legitimacy in school; inclusion and coexistence establish conditions for participation and recognition; and ancestral and territorial knowledge strengthen the relationship between school, community, and cultural identity. In this articulation, the IEP acquires a strategic role as a device capable of integrating these dimensions and translating them into curricular, pedagogical, coexistence, community, and institutional orientations. From this perspective, intercultural education is no longer conceived as a complementary component of the educational project and is configured as a transversal principle to understand and guide the decisions through which the school recognizes diversity, legitimizes different forms of

knowledge and builds its relationship with the community and the territory.

Conclusions

The review made it possible to establish that intercultural education cannot be understood as an isolated component of school life, but as a transversal perspective that crosses institutional culture, curriculum, pedagogical practices, inclusion, coexistence, ancestral knowledge, territory and the relationship with the community. The analysis of the 30 articles shows that the school not only transmits content, but also produces meanings, legitimizes certain forms of knowledge and configures ways of recognizing—or making invisible—diversity. Consequently, thinking about the incorporation of intercultural education in the Institutional Educational Project implies transcending its documentary formulation and analyzing the decisions and practices through which the educational project is materialized on a daily basis.

In relation to the objective of the article, school culture emerges as a first conceptual element to understand this articulation, as it includes the practices, norms, languages, meanings and relationships that make up institutional life. This culture can favor the recognition of diversity, but also reproduce homogenization processes when it is built on unique conceptions of student, knowledge and school success. From this perspective, an interculturally oriented IEP requires recognizing who makes up the educational community, what identities and cultural trajectories converge in it and how they find representation and participation in the common educational project.

The curriculum constitutes a second articulating element. The findings allow us to conclude that intercultural education cannot be reduced to the occasional incorporation of content related to diversity or to the realization of commemorative activities. It involves questioning what knowledge is considered legitimate, what experiences enter the classroom, and how relationships are established between

school knowledge and that constructed in family, community, and territorial contexts. Consequently, if the IEP guides the curricular decisions of the institution, it can also constitute a scenario from which the memories of the territory, ancestral knowledge, community experiences, and the various cultural ways of learning and producing knowledge are recognized.

A third element corresponds to the relationship between inclusion, coexistence and interculturality. The studies analyzed show that the presence of cultural diversity does not in itself guarantee intercultural educational relations. Structural and attitudinal barriers, discriminatory practices and forms of exclusion may persist in the school that affect the participation and recognition of certain students and communities. Therefore, the rector, from his strategic leadership, must not only recognize the existence of differences, but also generate institutional, pedagogical and convivial conditions so that they can express themselves and participate in conditions of equity in the construction of school life.

Likewise, ancestral knowledge, territory and community acquire special relevance in an intercultural educational proposal. The review shows that knowledge produced outside the educational institution has formative potential and can establish significant relationships with school knowledge. Its incorporation, however, requires overcoming folklorizing or instrumental perspectives that reduce it to complementary activities. Recognizing them as legitimate forms of knowledge implies moving towards a more horizontal relationship between school and community and towards a curricular conception open to the dialogue of knowledge. In this sense, interculturality also poses a challenge of epistemic justice, in that it demands a review of the hierarchies through which the institution determines what knowledge is recognized, taught and valued.

However, one of the most relevant findings of the review is the limited explicit articulation between intercultural education and the Institutional Educational Project in the literature analyzed. Although the studies address closely related dimensions—school culture, curriculum, inclusion, coexistence, community knowledge, territory, and participation—these are not always integrated into an institutional understanding of the IEP. This gap constitutes, at the same time, a limitation of the field reviewed and an opportunity for theoretical development.

Based on this observation, the main conceptual contribution of the article is to propose that the IEP can be understood as an articulating device of intercultural education, capable of integrating at least the identity, curricular, pedagogical, convivial, community and institutional dimensions. This approach shifts interculturality from a declarative formulation to a transversal criterion to guide concrete decisions of the institution. In this way, the question is no longer limited to whether the school recognizes diversity and moves towards how this recognition transforms what is taught, the knowledge that is legitimized, the relationships that are built, the voices that participate and the decisions through which the common educational project is configured.

The scope of these conclusions must be interpreted considering the characteristics of the review carried out. The corpus was made up of 30 articles published between 2020 and 2026, selected according to the criteria established in the methodological route; therefore, the results offer an interpretative approach built from this documentary set and do not intend to exhaust the existing production on intercultural education or generalize its findings to all educational contexts.

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Likewise, the limited presence of studies that explicitly articulate interculturality and IEP restricts the possibility of empirically contrasting some of the conceptual relationships proposed in this article.

Consequently, future research could move towards the empirical validation of this approach, through studies developed in culturally diverse educational institutions that allow analyzing how intercultural principles are translated into the design, implementation, and evaluation of the IEP. It would be especially pertinent to study the participation of students, teachers, families, and communities in its construction; the effective incorporation of ancestral and territorial knowledge into the curriculum; the transformations of pedagogical and coexistence practices; and the institutional mechanisms used to evaluate the impact of these decisions.

In short, the IEP can constitute a strategic framework for the materialization of intercultural education as long as it transcends the enunciation of general principles and manages to convert them into verifiable institutional decisions. Its potential lies in articulating identity, curriculum, pedagogy, coexistence, community participation and management from the recognition of cultural and epistemic plurality. In this perspective, interculturality ceases to be a word incorporated into the school discourse to become a living criterion of institutional decision-making. An intercultural school is not defined only because it recognizes that there are differences, but because it creates the conditions for these differences to have a voice, recognition and capacity to influence the construction of the common educational project.

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