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Management strategies in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching-learning process: A comparative analysis of Ecuadorian Public and Private institutions

Estrategias de gestión en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL): Un análisis comparativo de instituciones ecuatorianas públicas y privadas

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Abstract

This research investigation delves into the classroom management routines and protocols implemented by English educators within two educational institutions, one public and the other private, over the course of a senior academic year. The primary objective of this inquiry is to dissect the commonalities and disparities between these institutions concerning their methodologies for classroom management. The researchers strive to identify the challenges encountered by instructors when implementing classroom management routines and protocols, alongside assessing students' comprehension of and adherence to these established procedures. The research employs a blend of three data collection methodologies: observation checklists, surveys, and interviews, which collectively employ triangulation to offer comprehensive insights. The findings divulge substantial disparities and limitations in the application of routines and procedures between the public and private institutions, notably concerning behavioral control and the diversity of pedagogical activities integrated into lessons. The public institution demonstrates a heightened degree of instructor authority in overseeing student behavior, while the private institution incorporates a more intricate range of activities


during instructional sessions. Drawing from the conclusions derived from this research, the authors proffer tailored recommendations to English instructors in both educational settings. These recommendations are meticulously formulated to address the identified challenges and proffer potential resolutions for augmenting classroom management, thereby ultimately facilitating the pedagogical trajectory of teaching and learning.

Keywords: management, routines, strategies

Resumen

Esta investigación explora las rutinas y protocolos de gestión del aula practicados por los educadores de inglés en dos instituciones educativas, una pública y otra privada, a lo largo del último año de bachillerato. El objetivo principal de esta indagación es analizar las similitudes y diferencias entre estas instituciones en lo que respecta a sus enfoques de gestión del aula. Los investigadores se esfuerzan por identificar los desafíos que enfrentan los instructores al implementar rutinas y protocolos de gestión del aula, además de evaluar la comprensión y adherencia de los estudiantes a estos procedimientos establecidos. La investigación emplea una combinación de tres metodologías de recopilación de datos: listas de verificación de observación, encuestas y entrevistas, que colectivamente utilizan la triangulación para ofrecer perspectivas integrales. Los resultados revelan disparidades y limitaciones sustanciales en la aplicación de rutinas y procedimientos entre las instituciones públicas y privadas, especialmente en lo que respecta al control del comportamiento y la diversidad de actividades pedagógicas integradas en las lecciones. La institución pública demuestra un mayor grado de autoridad del instructor en la supervisión del comportamiento del estudiante, mientras que la institución privada incorpora una gama más compleja de actividades durante las sesiones de instrucción. Basándose en las conclusiones derivadas de esta investigación, los autores ofrecen recomendaciones específicas para los instructores de inglés en ambos entornos educativos. Estas recomendaciones están meticulosamente formuladas para abordar los desafíos identificados y ofrecer posibles soluciones para mejorar la gestión del aula, facilitando así la trayectoria pedagógica del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: gestión, rutinas, estrategias

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INTRODUCTION

Within the context of Latin America, the proficiency levels in English remain insufficient, and this trend extends to Ecuador. As highlighted by the 2022 Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index (EPI), Ecuador ranks among the two countries with the lowest English proficiency levels in the Latin American hierarchy. Moreover, the EF EPI emphasizes the essentiality for Latin American nations to prioritize the enhancement of students' English language skills by investing in the professional development of educators. Nevertheless, it is worth considering that the adequacy of educators' training could potentially fall short, given the intricate interplay between learners' achievements and the classroom environment where instruction transpires.

As noted by Brown (2012), the linkage between classroom management and student performance has gained heightened significance due to the growing population of students displaying subpar academic outcomes. Despite educators deploying an array of pedagogical strategies, the issue of unsatisfactory performance persists. The author posits that this phenomenon arises from inadequacies in classroom management strategies, which ultimately have an adverse impact on students' scholastic accomplishments.

Moreover, the present circumstances faced by English instructors within Ecuadorian private and public educational institutions can be arduous, primarily attributed to the introduction of various new educational reforms mandated by the Ministry of Education. The trajectory of educational reforms commenced in 2006 with the inception of the Ten-Year Education Plan, which was succeeded two years later by the formulation of the National Plan for Good Living. Subsequently, in 2011, the Intercultural Education Law was ratified, ushering in several nationwide transformations aimed at enhancing both educational access and quality, as outlined in these seminal documents. (Harvey, 2016).

An additional factor demanding consideration is the complexity teaching assumes in contemporary times when educators lack comprehensive preparation within the educational domain. According to Calle et al. (2012), the reduced English proficiency exhibited by secondary school students in Cuenca can be attributed, among various factors, to the employment of ineffective conventional methodologies, an inadequacy of communicative interactions, and the insufficient integration of the target language by EFL instructors. These elements can be correlated with inadequate academic training of teachers.

Classroom Management

According to the Psychological Association, classroom management pertains to the systematic approach adopted by educators and educational institutions to cultivate and uphold appropriate student conduct within an educational setting. Moreover, the process of effectively administering a classroom encompasses a range of activities carried out by both educators and students, along with the dissemination of instructional content that must be harmonized with the learners' capabilities and requisites, as well as the predetermined pedagogical objectives (Greenberg et al., 2014).

Wong (2007) underscores in his scholarly work that the establishment of a well-organized classroom environment at the outset of the academic year can serve as a valuable strategy for educators to avoid becoming part of the annual 40 percent attrition rate within the teaching profession. Despite common perception focusing on discipline, it is worth noting that the primary issue in classrooms is typically the absence of clearly defined procedures and routines.

In the investigation conducted by Rinkel (2011), a framework is delineated wherein educators are enjoined to adhere to a quartet of essential components in their instructional milieu, constituting the bedrock of adept classroom administration. This framework entails the

articulation of well-defined anticipatory parameters, the cultivation of authoritativeness, the embodiment of professionalism, and the provision of educational value. Foremost among these aspects is the establishment of unequivocal anticipatory guidelines, serving as the inaugural stride in the direction of efficacious classroom governance. This strategic maneuver facilitates students' comprehension of appropriate behavioral demarcations and precludes intricate circumstances, thereby affording lucidity to the pedagogical aims espoused by their instructors.

Moreover, it is imperative for educators to exhibit proficiency in the subject matter being disseminated, thereby manifesting both credibility and genuine interest in their students' learning. Another salient factor is the embodiment of professionalism, wherein a conscientious commitment to the teaching vocation is paramount for the realization of a meticulously regulated classroom environment. Lastly, instructors bear the responsibility of elucidating the inherent learning value to their students, thereby conferring significance upon the educational content delivered. The aforementioned scholars accentuate that adept classroom managers encompass pedagogues who possess an astute comprehension of and adeptness in employing specific methodologies. This proficiency necessitates cognizance and training in order to effectuate transformative alterations in teacher conduct for the betterment of the instructional process. Such strategic interventions can consequently engender favorable shifts in student demeanor and scholastic accomplishment.

Routines

Numerous educators have implemented an extensive array of systematic patterns and methodologies, encompassing the fundamental ones relating to distinct instructional resources, and extending to the intricate facets like the arrangement of students and the orchestration of classroom activities. Conversely, some educators allocate greater scrutiny to students' behavioral dynamics, aiming to foster a congenial ambience between pedagogues and pupils. Wong (2007) underscores the existence of a diverse spectrum of procedures that instructors can establish right from the inception of the academic year. To illustrate, these might encompass routines such as restroom usage protocols, responsiveness to attention cues, morning procedures, interactive reading sessions, independent study intervals, as well as contingency plans for emergencies.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Educational Settings of Ecuadorian Public and Private Schools

Goodloe (2005) postulated that opting for the private school system might be the optimal choice due to its abundant resources, consistent academic calendar, and rigorous teacher evaluation. In contrast, the public education system exhibited various deficiencies, foremost among them the scarcity of resources, notwithstanding its lower cost, teacher certification processes, and accommodation of religious freedoms.

Furthermore, the investigation by Burgin and Daniel (2017) aimed to underscore that the curriculum designed for training English educators inadequately addressed the pedagogical requisites of both teachers and students. This study also delved into the ongoing discourse concerning the impact of multicultural and multilingual factors within the educational milieu of Ecuador.

Concurrently, Calle et al. (2012) directed their focus towards the Ecuadorian educational framework. Their findings revealed a substantial correlation between the unsatisfactory English literacy performance of secondary school students and an array of contributing factors, including the utilization of conventional teaching methodologies.

Ecuadorian Educational Reforms

Ecuador underwent a comprehensive educational transformation, as scrutinized by Harvey (2016), who endeavored to comprehensively analyze the educational reform carried out within the nation from 2006 to 2015. The objective was to identify the reform's merits and demerits, offering potential insights for other countries to incorporate advancements into their own educational policies. The researcher's findings indicated that Ecuador directed its attention toward bolstering each constituent aspect to catalyze educational reform. However, despite these endeavors, limitations and inadequacies persist, resulting in deficiencies in the provision of universally high-quality education.

Within the scope of the present investigation, Harvey (2016) underscored the significance of quality processes, denoting the methodologies and strategies that educators employ to leverage the resources available to them. These processes were found to embrace child-centric pedagogical methodologies, fostering an environment of effective classroom management and adept assessment techniques that facilitate equitable learning outcomes and diminish educational disparities. Moreover, the implementation of quality processes appeared to be conducive to the creation of meaningful learning experiences.

The researcher further asserted that education yields a potent influence over individual and societal domains. Recent years have witnessed a worldwide emphasis on universalizing primary education. Many countries, Ecuador included, have embarked on educational policy reforms to actualize this aspiration. Nevertheless, despite the near-attainment of universal educational accessibility across Latin America, the pivotal focus must now shift towards ensuring the quality of education accessible to students.

Conclusively, the diverse findings drawn from the aforementioned studies offer an insightful panorama of classroom management and its implications, as well as delineating characteristics pertaining to expert pedagogy. Additionally, the comparative distinctions between public and private educational institutions are discerned, as are the ramifications of Ecuador's educational reform initiatives. Importantly, an understanding of the potential influence of distinct teacher training programs is highlighted, suggesting an openness towards change among educators. The amalgamation of diverse locations and contexts contributes synergistically to the advancement of the scholarly literature within this domain.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research was to comprehensively grasp the diverse routines and protocols adopted by educators to facilitate effective classroom management within the context of the teaching and learning process. To realize this objective, a mixed methods approach was employed. On one facet, qualitative investigation sought to ascertain educators' perspectives on optimal classroom routines and procedures through observations and semi-structured interviews. Concurrently, quantitative analysis was employed to quantify the extent of routines and procedures integrated by teachers during instructional sessions. These empirical insights were derived from the implementation of three distinct research tools: classroom observation checklists, questionnaires, and interviews, all conducted within two distinct high school settings—one public and the other private.

The study's participants encompassed senior-level teachers and students from both a public and a private high school situated in Cuenca, Ecuador. This inquiry entailed an examination of the array of routines and protocols harnessed by educators to navigate classroom dynamics during the instructional endeavor. The teaching staff's behaviors were scrutinized over a duration of one and a half months. As for the participants, they comprised a sample of 30 senior

students from the public high school and 29 senior students from the private institution. These individuals, ranging from ages 17 to 19, were enrolled in their final year of high school education within the morning session.

The observational phase was executed utilizing a meticulously tailored classroom observation checklist, meticulously fashioned to center on routines and procedures. This document was refined through piloting and validation exercises carried out within the same high school contexts, albeit involving distinct participants, in a concerted endeavor to ensure the dependability of the ensuing data. The observation timings were harmonized with the respective schedules of the participating students within each institution.

The resultant data obtained from the observation checklist were subjected to a comparative analysis, aimed at unveiling divergences and recurring patterns across the two distinct educational establishments. To facilitate this analysis, a tabular framework was devised, encompassing three distinct rows. The first row encapsulated information pertinent to the public institution, the second row encapsulated information specific to the private institution, and the third row encapsulated insights gleaned from the extant literature and theoretical framework. The ensuing analysis was predicated on gauging the frequency of specific routines and procedures, quantified as percentages derived from the total observations conducted. This evaluative approach engendered conclusions through the juxtaposition of findings from the institutions and the broader literature review.

In parallel, the questionnaire responses underwent a perceptual analysis, enabling concurrent scrutiny alongside observation and literature-derived data. The discrete questions were parsed by quantifying responses corresponding to distinct options ("always," "sometimes," and "never") for the initial two inquiries. This perceptual analysis was predicated on aggregating the cumulative responses for each institution, as well as the composite aggregate. The third query adopted a multiple-choice format, wherein students could select three options from the enumerated routines and procedures. Similarly, percentages were calculated predicated on the aggregate responses for each institution and the overall collective.

Furthermore, the researchers engaged in semi-structured interviews with the teaching faculty. The interview protocol was anchored in the observations conducted, supplemented by inquiries delving into the gamut of encountered classroom management challenges, perceptions about utilized routines and procedures, and the manner in which they were implemented to regulate classroom dynamics. The recorded interviews were transcribed into a textual format to enable preliminary analysis, with emerging categories including classroom management, challenges therein, and routines and protocols. In this analytical process, the researchers also took cognizance of patterns of convergence across statements.

Following the comprehensive application of the diverse research instruments, data triangulation ensued as a means to bolster study reliability. This entailed the juxtaposition of data culled from the observations, questionnaires, and interviews, culminating in the establishment of outcomes that warranted in-depth discussion. In alignment with the assertion posited by Yeasmin and Rahman (2012), triangulation emerges as a potent technique to heighten both the credibility and validity of research findings, thereby corroborating findings from varied vantage points. The triangulation approach affords researchers heightened confidence in their findings and augments the robustness of the resultant data. In this research, data triangulation was operationalized through a meticulous comparison of data garnered from the three distinct research instruments—namely, observations, questionnaires, and interviews—thus augmenting the credibility of the amassed empirical evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Upon the administration of questionnaires to students, aimed at eliciting their perceptions regarding their instructors, the respondents proffered insights aligned with a particular notion, while the educators within both academic settings actually implemented diverse routines and strategies during the instructional process. Despite this outcome, the researchers discerned that the complete implementation of routines and protocols within the classroom setting was not consistently evident. Evident from Table 1, the analysis revealed a conspicuous absence of bathroom routines in virtually all the observed classes.

Table 1

Questionnaire Routines and Protocols Results

Routines	Both	Always	Sometimes	Never
Taking Attendance	100 %	89.5%	10.5%	0%
Responding to signals for attention	100 %	68.4%	31.6%	0%
Bathroom Routines	100 %	47.4%	45.6%	7%
Morning Routines	100 %	50.9%	45.6%	3.5%
Transitions	100 %	66.7%	28%	5.3%
Independent work-time routines	100 %	89.5%	10.5%	0%
Read-aloud Routines	100 %	49.1%	45.6%	5.3%
Emergency Routines	100 %	0%	100%	0%
Dismissal Routines	100 %	7%	22.8%	70.2 %
Protocol for when students are absent	100 %	52.6%	22.8%	24.6 %
Protocol for quieting a class	100 %	91.2%	8.8%	0%
Protocol for the beginning of the period or day	100 %	3.5%	38.6%	57.9 %
Protocol for students seeking help	100 %	80.7%	19.3%	0%
Protocol for the movement of students and papers	100 %	86%	14%	0%

Additionally, the consensus among most students resided in favor of routines and procedures that encompassed kinetic engagement and individualized activities. This apparent preference could be attributed to the prevalent adoption of such methodologies by their instructors. Intriguingly, the research team noted a notable incongruity between students' questionnaire responses and the observed classroom practices.

Furthermore, students' suggestions through open-ended queries highlighted the desirability of dynamic lessons imbued with interactive games, diverse engaging activities, and music. The responses collectively underscored students' overarching anticipation for English classes characterized by stimulating and motivating attributes. Paradoxically, certain classes exhibited

an element of repetitiveness, where instructors persisted in employing identical activities across successive sessions with various cohorts.

In conclusion, these assertions potentially elucidate the variance observed between questionnaire outcomes, which presented disparate information as opposed to the observation checklist. This incongruity can potentially be attributed to students' divergent responses during the questionnaire phase, wherein they asserted that their instructors consistently employed the delineated routines and procedures, contrary to the researchers' empirical observations. This discrepancy might be attributed, in part, to students' potential lack of clarity regarding the concepts of protocols and routines, despite prior elucidation by the researchers. Furthermore, the variance might stem from students' possible limited attentiveness during their English classes.

Table 2

Public Institution Checklist Results

Class Structure	Yes	No	No opportunity to observe
Evidence of lesson planning	85.7 %	14.3 %	0%
Classroom assessment Techniques are used	85.7 %	0%	14.3%
Taking Attendance	28.6 %	71.4 %	0%
Responding to signals for attention	57.1 %	42.9 %	0%
Bathroom Routines	14.3 %	0%	85.7%
Morning Routines	42.9 %	57.1 %	0%
Transitions	57.1 %	28.6 %	14.3%
Independent work-time routines	42.9 %	57.1 %	0%
Read-aloud Routines	85.7 %	0%	14.3%
Emergency Routines	0%	0%	100%
Dismissal Routines	14.3 %	57.1 %	28.6%
Protocol when students are absent	14.3 %	28.6 %	57.1%
Protocol for quieting a class	71.4 %	14.3 %	14.3%
Protocol for the beginning of the period or day	57.1 %	42.9 %	0%
Protocol for students seeking help	71.4 %	28.6 %	0%
Protocol for the movement of students and papers	42.9 %	57.1 %	0%

Table 3

Private Institution Checklist Results

Class Structure	Yes	No	No opportunity to observe
Evidence of lesson planning	100%	0%	0%
Classroom assessment Techniques are used	85.7%	14.3%	0%
Taking Attendance	28.6%	71.4%	0%
Responding to signals for attention	85.7%	14.3%	0%
Bathroom Routines	28.6%	42.9%	28.6%
Morning Routines	28.6%	28.6%	42.9%
Transitions	85.7%	14.3%	0%
Independent work-time routines	77.6%	0%	28.6%
Read-aloud Routines	28.6%	0%	77.6%
Emergency Routines	0%	0%	100%
Dismissal Routines	85.7%	14.3%	0%
Protocol when students are absent	0%	57.1%	42.9%
Protocol for quieting a class	28.6%	71.4%	0%
Protocol for the beginning of the period or day	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%
Protocol for students seeking help	100%	0%	0%
Protocol for the movement of students and papers	57.1%	14.3%	28.9%

Drawing upon the comprehensive utilization of three distinct research instruments—namely, observations, questionnaires, and interviews—the researchers are poised to present their ultimate reflections, encapsulated as follows.

Inaugurally, the juxtaposition of observational findings and questionnaire responses yielded divergent outcomes. Students' affirmations within the questionnaires regarding the implementation of routines and procedures contrasted starkly with the actual non-implementation observed during classroom observations. It is plausible to surmise that the reported alignment between students' answers and observed practices could be attributed to the potential execution of routines and procedures prior to the commencement of the researchers' observation period, thereby influencing the students' responses.

Conversely, during the interview phase, educators proffered assorted perspectives pertaining to classroom management in a general sense. However, these perspectives exhibited limited alignment with the predefined inquiry points. Insights gleaned from the interviews unveiled a prevailing trend wherein teachers displayed a theoretical grasp of effective classroom management strategies, discerning complexities intrinsic to classroom dynamics, and acknowledging the significance of routines and procedures within the teaching and learning

milieu. Paradoxically, the observed classroom practices did not consistently mirror these theoretical insights within both educational settings.

Ultimately, fostering student engagement and motivation in the realm of language instruction assumes paramount significance for both educators and learners. Moreover, the educational curriculum stipulated by the Ministry of Education underscores the pivotal role of teachers and mandates the adept integration of varied routines and procedures to engender meaningful and pertinent learning activities, culminating in learner-centered pedagogy within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

CONCLUSION

Upon the culmination of this inquiry, it becomes pertinent to furnish conclusive findings along with pertinent recommendations and avenues for prospective research endeavors within the domain of education.

Primarily, instructors from both educational institutions frequently encountered challenging scenarios associated with classroom management, particularly in relation to student conduct. It is noteworthy that neither of the institutions consistently maintained a well-organized and disciplined classroom environment. However, in the case of the public institution, the teacher's capacity to navigate such circumstances appeared more proficient compared to the private counterpart. This discrepancy could be attributed to the heightened authority wielded by the public institution's teacher over student discipline, evident in aspects such as tone of speech and classroom conduct.

Furthermore, both educators demonstrated limited deployment of routines and procedures during instructional sessions, resulting in students lacking a comprehensive grasp of the purpose and application of these instructional elements. This inconsistency between questionnaire responses and observation checklists is perhaps explained by the incongruence in the participants' self-reported behaviors and the researchers' empirical observations.

Divergences between questionnaire responses and observation checklists emerged due to incongruities within the collected data. While students indicated that their teachers adhered to all designated routines and procedures, the researchers' direct observations revealed instances where diverse strategies and techniques relevant to classroom management were underutilized. Additionally, the application of educators' routines and procedures exhibited variations, with certain aspects diverging while others converged. For instance, there was negligible contrast in routines such as attendance-taking or bathroom protocols. In contrast, the method employed to quieten the class exhibited divergence. The public institution teacher adeptly employed strategies for maintaining order, while the private institution counterpart's approach lacked efficacy, evident in the lack of positive response from students.

In summation, this study contends that the institutional classification - public or private - does not singularly dictate the efficacy of classroom management or students' conduct. Both participants within the teaching and learning nexus wield consequential influence within their respective institutions. As advocated by numerous scholars (Adams and Ray, 2016; Al-Zu'bi, 2013; Al-Amarat, 2017; AliakbariBafrin and Bozorgmanesh, 2015; Marzano, 2007; Rabadi and Ray, 2017; Wilson, 2010; and Wong, 2007), educators assume pivotal roles in the instructional process and, consequently, shoulder the responsibility of proactive classroom management.

Concurrent with the findings of this study, parallels with previous research are delineated. For instance, Goodloe (2005) delved into an exploration of the advantages, disadvantages, and disparities between public and private schooling systems in Cuenca. Analogously, the present inquiry discerns divergences between public and private school English teachers, notably the

disparity in discipline control observed between the two institutions. Additionally, the distinct approaches to garnering students' attention employed by the private institution teacher constitute a significant departure from the practices of their public institution counterpart.

Furthermore, Calle et al. (2012) contends that the primary factor contributing to students' constrained comprehension and subpar English proficiency is closely linked to the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of strategies employed by English language educators. The current investigation yielded analogous findings with regards to the deficiency of pedagogical strategies being implemented across the respective institutions.

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