

Academic Quality in Municipal Training Programs: A Systematic Review of the Last 5 Years

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Abstract

This systematic review follows the strict PRISMA 2020 protocol with its 27 check items, examining the academic quality of municipal training programs between 2021 and 2025. It focuses on Latin American countries such as Ecuador and Colombia. The research question addresses the factors affecting planning, work, and evaluation indicators, as well as problems in different locations, including inadequate facilities, limited access to digital technology, resource scarcity in affected rural areas, and high dropout rates, which have increased due to the gaps created by the pandemic. Of the initial number of records found in databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, Dialnet, and ALICIA Concytec, only 11 studies were included in this work. The findings show the importance of forging alliances between different sectors, sustainably monitoring the work, and conducting periodic evaluations to improve pedagogical knowledge in order to reduce social and economic disparities, so that everyone has the same opportunities in the territory. It is concluded that municipal policies should prioritize curricular alignment with labor demands, digital inclusion, and community participation in decisions made by the local government regarding training. The weaknesses include methodological heterogeneity and publication biases; therefore, meta-analyses are recommended in the future, along with an openness to gray literature for robust generalizations.

Keywords: *Academic Quality, Municipal Training, Educational Management, Teacher Training.*

Introduction

The quality of education in municipal training programs faces significant obstacles, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to communication technologies, and scarce resources in areas with weak economies (López & Uquillas, 2025). These factors negatively impact the experience of participants in municipal training programs and the alignment of these curricula with local needs.

Furthermore, in local contexts such as Ecuador, deficiencies persist in access to continuing professional development for teachers and officials provided by municipalities. For example, in the municipality of Esmeraldas, 65% of teachers lack recent professional development, thus exacerbating educational disparities (Villarreal-Puga & Araujo-Albarrán, 2024). These problems generate academic inadequacy, a high dropout rate, and a finite supply that does not meet the demands of the labor market or the needs of the community.

On the other hand, this problem of the poor quality of municipal training programs is worsened in Ecuador due to the gap between the weak existing supply and the demand related to digital transformation, innovation, and inclusion, which are part of national plans such as the National Training and Capacity Building Plan for the Public Sector 2022-2025 (Ministry of Labor of Ecuador, 2025), which indicates that there is a need for professionalization of human talent in the public sector to address the complex realities of each sector.

Similarly, in the field of formal education, problems persist in areas such as Mathematics, Language, and Science in public educational institutions, along with limitations in access to education after the pandemic, long distances to reach these institutions, and the lack of personalized education when needed, thus limiting the impact of municipal educational projects (Espinel et al., 2022). These

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difficulties, coupled with a weak link to territorial development and social justice goals, create disparities in access to meaningful training and/or education, affecting local or municipal governments and resulting in deficient quality of the training they promote.

In this context arises the research question that guides this systematic review: what are the most significant factors affecting the academic quality of municipal training programs over the past five years, considering their planning, implementation, evaluation, and contextual barriers? This question seeks to identify limiting factors such as low certification rates, poor quality of instruction, and disparities in access to resources, in order to provide effective solutions through research processes. Thus, rigorous methods are employed to examine the impact of municipal public policies related to ongoing training and academic quality.

In line with the stated question, the objective of this systematic review is to examine the academic quality of municipal training courses conducted between 2021 and 2025. This study seeks to identify their greatest strengths and weaknesses, as well as the ideologies that have influenced their design, implementation, and evaluation. This method facilitates the association and processing of recent scientific data to guide decision-making aimed at improving learning management at the municipal level, through more holistic training processes aligned with current policies promoting high-quality education provided by local governments.

Furthermore, the analysis reviewed the most significant indicators for quality education, such as the curricular alignment of training programs, the development of competencies, and the measurement of the results these programs achieve in the community. It also identified the obstacles that often hinder their work, including poverty, lack of access to technology, and the challenges of achieving equitable access to academic training for all. Therefore, the study also seeks to analyze approaches that have yielded positive results in ongoing instruction within municipal settings, highlighting skills-based methods that require collaborative work and actions that empower participants to take an active role in their own learning. Based on the findings, suggestions are offered to enhance the academic quality of programs offered by municipalities for the professional development of professionals and other citizens.

In other respects, it should be noted that current literature indicates that quality education in training programs depends on efficient management, which focuses on updated curricula, uses technology, and considers educational policies when evaluating these programs. However, challenges such as academic pressure and unequal access to resources remain (Hurtado, 2024). Therefore, studies in both master's programs and initial teacher training link management with learning, revealing clear connections between them to improve student performance. Meanwhile, according to Matamoros and Bravo (2025), in municipal programs, the pursuit of quality management focuses on ensuring that the academic offerings meet the needs of their jurisdiction. However, this faces significant challenges between the community's aspirations and what municipalities can actually provide.

According to Merchán et al. (2025), continuing education is crucial for strengthening academic quality, as it promotes the development of competencies, skills, and ways of behaving through interactions among members of the educational community and pedagogical practices. Hence, the importance of municipalities, as governmental organizations, contributing to continuing education processes for teachers in the education system. Furthermore, previous systematic reviews conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) method, which have examined contributions to the existing literature in databases such as Scopus and EBSCO, have identified quantitative, qualitative, and mixed studies that detail the importance of employing didactic strategies and group reflection to improve the academic quality of programs offered by municipalities (Álava-Álava et al., 2025).

Previous studies highlight areas like Esmeraldas in Ecuador, where the local offerings provided by the municipality are limited due to poor rural connectivity, which negatively impacts academic training and creates disparities in teachers' professional development (Rodríguez, 2023). This underscores the need to strengthen the academic quality of programs offered by municipalities, particularly in rural areas, by increasing the range of training opportunities. This will help reduce existing gaps and achieve professional equity, ultimately leading to better job opportunities.

However, this problem is not limited to a single country, since municipal programs throughout Latin America show academic shortcomings due to limited offerings and high dropout rates, resulting from the region's socioeconomic difficulties and inadequate infrastructure (Solís et al., 2025). This underscores the scope of the problem, positioning the strengthening of municipal programs as a key factor in improving their academic quality. Furthermore, studies from local higher education institutions

highlight the need for contextualized training based on constructivist learning to improve teacher training outcomes, citing examples such as Cañar and Azuay, where significant interventions are currently underway (Contreras et al., 2025). These studies demonstrate the necessity of partnerships with businesses and precise assessments to reduce training gaps.

At this point, it is important to highlight that research from local universities demonstrates the importance of making learning meaningful by contextualizing specialized training in municipal centers (Medina, 2025). Therefore, implementing significant interventions in communities is crucial for improving the quality of training offered in these centers. Furthermore, this information underscores the need to collaborate with businesses and maintain rigorous evaluations to help bridge the existing gaps.

In this regard, systematic reviews such as this one are highly valuable, as they conduct detailed and in-depth analyses of the current literature on the academic quality of programs offered by municipal schools. This, in turn, allows for the identification of scientific difficulties and the systematization of previous studies to determine inconsistencies and suggest new approaches (Sánchez-Martín et al., 2022). Therefore, it is crucial that municipal schools employ this technique to map recent trends on the topic and support the development of public policies that strengthen the quality of educational work. For this reason, this review aims to systematize data that will allow for the identification of the challenges and problems that persist in municipal public education.

Methodology and Materials

This systematic review follows the PRISMA 2020 methodology, which outlines 27 elements in its review checklist, including authors, year of publication, title, abstract, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions. The review aims to minimize bias during the search, selection, and screening of research articles in the databases (Chocobar & Barrera, 2025). Based on this approach, an exhaustive search was planned in databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Dialnet, SciELO, and ALICIA Concytec to extract data related to the topic and analyze them using methods at different stages. To achieve this, a PRISMA flowchart was designed to illustrate how the records were analyzed from the initial search to the final selection. "It should be noted that this methodology is widely used in educational research to establish the state of the art and provide answers to the research questions due to its ease of replicability and scientific consistency.

The inclusion criteria allowed us to integrate articles published between 2021 and 2025, in both Spanish and English, from indexed journals that analyze the academic quality of municipal training programs with empirical designs (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) and that pay special attention to indicators such as curriculum, implementation, and evaluation in local or public contexts. The exclusion criteria allowed us to discard narrative reviews, editors' opinions, texts published before 2021, studies focused on private or non-municipal training, reports that were not peer-reviewed, and unpublished theses. Furthermore, the evidence for the results was reviewed to avoid bias. This was done by applying the criteria in two well-defined phases: in the first phase, the title and abstract were read, while in the second phase, the full text of the screened documents was read. Finally, disagreements were resolved by consensus.

On the other hand, the search was organized using the following structure: ("school quality" OR "educational quality" OR "school management") AND ("training courses" OR "local training" OR "municipal teaching" OR "community education") AND ("logical exam" OR data OR review OR problems), within the last 5 years (2021-2025) in databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Dialnet, SciELO, and ALICIA Concytec. The logical operators used were AND to combine important ideas and achieve accuracy in the results, and OR to broaden the search with synonyms for "municipal." Similarly, quotation marks (* for changes such as "quality *") were used to further refine the search and compilation of texts related to the topic. In this way, a pilot test was carried out and the respective adjustment was made to intensify the level of sensitivity and specificity that allows finding articles directly related to the topic of quality of municipal training.

Results and Discussion

From the studies included in this work (final estimated n 11), a database was extracted and organized in Table 1 with the following sections: authors, year, methodology, main results, and conclusions. These data were verified by experts. Similarly, the risk of bias was assessed using tools such as the ROBINS-I for non-randomized studies (González-Aroca, 2025). For narrative data, a thematic synthesis or meta-analysis is preferred. Therefore, Table 1 presents a summary of the studies included in this work.

Table 1 Data Collection

Author(s)	Year	Objective of the Study	Methodology	Main Results	Conclusions
Zarzosa	2025	Analyze the relationship between educational quality and teacher performance in municipal schools.	Quantitative approach and correlational design, applying questionnaires to 201 teachers in five institutions.	Statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship between both variables and their dimensions: strategic management, comprehensive training, support and resource management, and results management.	In summary, educational quality and teacher performance in municipal schools are intrinsically linked, which is evidence of the need to strengthen synergies, training, planning and strategic resources to promote meaningful learning.
Garcés	2025	Analyze the most common databases to determine the state of the art of research on the topic: synergy to improve the quality of education at the local level in Colombia.	Systematic literature review.	A strategy for managing the various problems of learning cities has not yet been established, because synergy involves visualizing the city and how citizens can contribute to making it feel like their own.	The nine cities in Colombia, following the new learning city model, however, there is very little academic work related to this object of study.
González	2025	This study analyzes the impact of the Single School Day on the educational quality of institutions in the municipality of Ciénaga de Oro, Córdoba, Colombia.	Mixed approach with sequential explanatory design	The results reveal moderate improvements in academic performance, especially in language and mathematics, when there are adequate infrastructure conditions, teacher training and institutional support.	The success of the Single School Day does not depend solely on increasing school time, but on its articulation with pedagogical strategies, institutional management and community participation.
Rosero et al.,	2025	Identify strategies to optimize public administration and improve	A mixed approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods,	Leadership and public administration are key factors in the academic and institutional	It is concluded that strong leadership and strategic management are essential to

		educational performance.	including a descriptive-correlational design, selecting a sample of 100 directors, teachers and administrative staff from public educational in various regions.	performance of public schools in Ecuador.	optimize institutional performance.
Trujillo et al.,	2023	Recognizes that education and the educational system constitute one of the main instruments of change that society has.	Documentary analysis performed on 19 documents (and 455 abstracts), from a hermeneutic perspective.	Educational reforms in some Latin American countries were reviewed, which have reformed the teaching profession to improve the quality of national and international education systems.	It is concluded that initial teacher training and continuous professional development are central elements of educational quality, which have generated various institutional policies of a national and international nature.
Miano	2025	Analysis of two instances convened by an Alternating Education Center to develop projects together with the rural community, aimed at improving the quality of life of rural families.	Categorical analysis of audio transcripts generated from participant observation	A high degree of complexity was observed in building consensus among the various participating actors.	It was concluded that, in these Educational Centers, an active role is assigned to families in relation to the possibilities of creating strategies that improve their quality of life.
Zambrano et al.,	2025	Analysis of the main challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of this approach in the educational field, with special attention to the Ecuadorian context.	Qualitative approach, with documentary analysis and bibliographic review of works published between 2016 and 2024 in various scientific databases.	The trend was determined to prioritize documentation to meet external accreditation requirements, at the expense of a genuine internalization of a quality culture.	It is concluded that the success of process management in the educational field depends on a balance between compliance with external regulations and the promotion of an internal quality culture that involves all

					educational stakeholders.
Peralta et al.,	2023	Analyze the available evidence on administrative management in educational management units.	A review of articles from the scientific literature in the databases of Scielo, Scopus, Redalyc and Latindex was conducted, taking into account articles whose context has developed in Latin American countries.	As a result, 10 relevant articles were obtained that contain the most important ideas and met the objectives of this review.	It is concluded that good administrative management helps to lead, communicate and make full use of human resources to achieve quality education and job satisfaction among teaching staff.
Cheme et al.,	2025	Analyze the impact of continuous teacher training programs on the academic performance of students in rural public schools in Ecuador during the period 2020-2021.	Using a quasi-experimental design with control groups, six educational units were evaluated in the provinces of Cañar and Azuay.	The results showed that the most effective teacher training programs were those with contextual relevance, focused on constructivist teaching strategies and accompanied by sustainable monitoring systems.	It is concluded that, in order for teacher training to remain a significant factor in improving the quality of rural education, it must be integrated into a broader approach that addresses the structural conditions of the Ecuadorian education system.
Soto-Grant & Castro-Garro	2024	Identify the main factors in assessing the academic quality of postgraduate programs applied by different self-assessment models in the Ibero-American region.	Qualitative research using comparative education methods to analyze seven existing self-assessment models in Chile, Ecuador, Central America, Colombia, and Spain.	Levels of relevance were identified between the factors and their corresponding evidence needed in determining the quality of a postgraduate program.	It was concluded that the three most important categories are pedagogical factors, administrative factors, and impact assessment.
Cedeño-Mendoza & Espinoza-Galvez	2024	To explore the relationship between institutional governance and academic quality in Higher Education,	Mixed approach with interviews and surveys conducted with key stakeholders, including rectors,	The results show that governance mechanisms must be strengthened in technological integration, continuous	It is concluded that more effective governance is needed to promote academic quality in

		taking as a case study the canton of Manta, Manabí province, Ecuador.	teachers and graduates.	teacher training, and the alignment of curricula with the demands of the labor market.	Higher Education institutions, in order to improve the professional preparation of graduates and contribute to the socio-economic development of the region.
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Source: Own elaboration

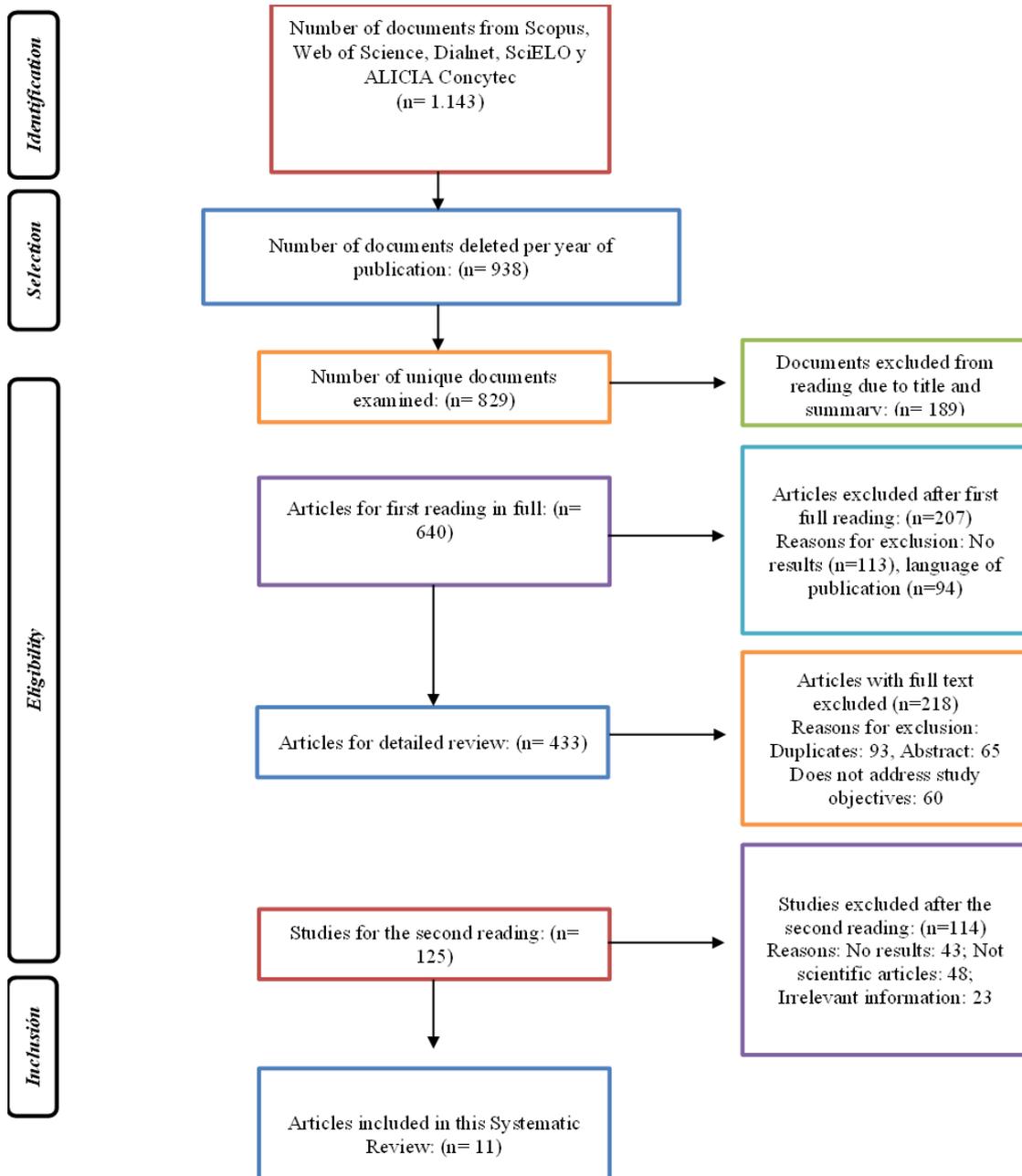


Figure 1 Search Diagram

The results of this systematic review show an important connection between the academic quality of municipal programs and elements such as strategic management, ongoing teacher training, and community participation, in line with studies such as that conducted by Zarzosa (2025), which established synergies in planning and resources to improve teachers' work. Meanwhile, in places like Ecuador and Colombia, context-based interventions, such as those by Cheme et al. (2025) in Cañar and Azuay, show that programs with a constructivist approach and consistent monitoring increase student success in rural areas by overcoming infrastructure barriers. These data answer the research question, highlighting that the curriculum is relevant and that collaborative work reduces inequalities, although problems related to certification and digital access persist.

On the other hand, governance management emerges as a crucial point. Rosero et al. (2025) and Peralta et al. (2023) mention that having a good leader and using the budget efficiently can contribute to ensuring that the educational offerings align with the needs of each community, reducing school dropout rates and improving skills. Meanwhile, in full-day programs, as González (2025) points out, success depends on how well-structured teaching is combined with strong support from the learning environment, not just on having more class time. This validates the objective of this analysis, which involved reviewing indicators on how it affects skills development and its impact on the education offered by municipalities. These strengths suggest that alliances will be formed between actors from different fields so that in many cities these models can be revived to achieve relative educational equality in Latin America.

Despite progress, challenges such as the lack of a strong internal quality culture and a focus on external accreditations, as reported by Zambrano et al. (2025), restrict the efficient implementation of municipal programs in Ecuador, exacerbating the problems mentioned in the introduction after the pandemic. Similarly, studies such as the one conducted by Garcés (2025) in Colombian cities demonstrate a deficient search for urban-rural synergies, consistent with omissions in this review that prioritize only recent real-world evidence. These contextualized difficulties, including geographical distance and poverty, demand policy actions that unify the management of institutions, as proposed by Cedeño-Mendoza and Espinoza-Galvez (2024), in order to strengthen the alignment between the curriculum of municipal programs and the labor market.

The findings compiled in this study differ from those descriptions that have been left out, but they support what Trujillo et al. (2023) said, linking changes in teaching methods among teachers from different parts of the world to good quality throughout the system by broadening their perspective to the local level using the PRISMA thematic synthesis. While Miano (2025) notes how difficult it is to reach an agreement in rural communities, Soto-Grant and Castro-Garro (2024) give more importance to issues such as how classes are conducted or how schools are managed within Ibero-American postgraduate programs, suggesting that this practice be transferred to local training programs through standardized self-evaluations. This clarity regarding the equation seeks trends from 2021 to 2025 without bias in the publications.

Conclusions

This systematic study shows that the quality of education in municipal programs during the years analyzed (2021-2025) depends on good planning management, teacher training adapted to the real situation, and collaborative work with others, as seen in the studies by Zarzosa (2025) and Cheme et al. (2025), which show better results when sharing resources and using constructivist approaches in Ecuador and Colombia. Similarly, perspectives on planning are very important for the curriculum, and their impact on initial teacher training answers the research question, highlighting problems such as the poor condition of buildings and differences in internet access, while also acknowledging the positive aspects of local participation and alignment with shared agendas.

Furthermore, the results show that it is necessary to combine a sound system of regulations with sustainable oversight, as noted by Rosero et al. (2025). Meanwhile, Cedeño-Mendoza and Espinoza-Galvéz (2024) indicate that to reduce educational neglect and inequality following the pandemic in rural areas such as Esmeraldas and Cañar, the academic quality of programs must be prioritized. Finally, methodological difficulties limit the meta-analysis. However, the summary made with the PRISMA method confirms that educational policies at the national level, such as the 2022-2025 learning plan, must pay more attention to giving the same opportunities to some areas as to others above external accreditations.

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