



Itinerant Pedagogical Advisors (API)

Monitoring Note 1

1. Aims

The educational strategy Itinerant Pedagogical Advisory (API)¹ was created by Conafe² as an educational intervention action that improves or enhances the development of skills and learning outcomes of children to ensure their successful journey through education levels.

Itinerant Pedagogical Advisor is a teaching or another career professional bachelor who has proven experience in basic education, that carries out various actions in two communities: S/he a) supports disadvantaged children in school performance, after applying a diagnostic assessment tool, b) gives instructional strategies to community instructors (IC) —who care for multilevel groups— that allow them to improve educational processes that happen in the classroom and c) promotes the participation of mothers and fathers, in order to support their children in their learning. This helps them to achieve improvements in learning fields related to language and communication training and mathematical thinking.

API and community instructors (teachers) do a collaborative work: they hold a pedagogical dialogue to design educational intervention strategies. This advisor is trained and supported during his/her advisory by the Operation and Monitoring Coordinators (COS)³ and state leaders as well as headquarters Council's staff, through training sessions, monitoring and evaluation.

The general purpose of API is 1) to contribute to improving the learning of disadvantaged children in school performance, 2) to advise community Instructors with strategies to enable them to strengthen the pedagogical processes that take place in the classroom and 3) to encourage a collaborative and dynamic participation of parents in education through pedagogical intervention.

The specific objectives of the strategy are:

- Contribute to the improvement of learning outcomes in Language and Communication and Mathematical Thought of primary community school and indigenous rural children who have a disadvantage in school performance.

¹ This is based on its original name: Asesor Pedagógico Itinerante

² National Council for the Development of Education

³ This is based on its original name: Coordinador de Operación y Seguimiento



- Contribute to the development of language and communication topics. (Mathematical Thought and Expression and Art Appreciation of third grade students in preschool, where applicable).
- Strengthen the teaching practices of community instructors to improve pedagogical processes that happen in the classroom.
- Support community instructors in identifying learning needs of students, as well as development of plans to improve teaching and learning.
- Promote parenting skills among parents to foster a better relationship within the family for the benefit of the development of children's learning.
- Provide parents with basic guidelines to get involved in the educational process of their children.

Conafe's Itinerant Pedagogical Advisory strategy is part of the National Development Plan - specifically in the National Goal: Mexico with Quality Education in its Strategy 3.1.5. "Reduce dropout, improve terminal efficiency at each educational level and increase transition rates from one level to another" that defines two lines of action:

- *Expand the operation of tutorial support systems in order to reduce dropout rates of students and encourage timely completion of their studies.*
- *Establish programs to support students who present academic deficiencies and strengthen the development of study habits among students.*

Likewise, the Itinerant Pedagogical Advisory is aligned to the Conafe's rector axis No. 1 "Quality and Educational Inclusion" that seeks to:

- *Continuously improve the processes of teaching and learning within the Community Education Model*
- *Offer students training commensurate with their level of development, needs and expectations, so inclusive, professional and modern.*

That is why Conafe continues this strategy that was designed from the critical analysis of experiences and results that others countries have shared in international forums as well as the knowledge accumulated by Conafe in implementing specific actions to improve teaching and learning in rural communities.

2. Leadership and partners

Conafe starts Itinerant Pedagogical Advisory's implementation as exploratory phase in the state of Guerrero in the 2008-2009 school year and has been gradually expanding to other states of country: 11 states in 2009-2010 school year), 14 states in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 cycles. Finally, in the beginning 2012-2013 school year API was implemented in all 31 states of México in Conafe's primary school services located in rural and indigenous areas.

After 5 cycles, 3,415 API have attended 5,843 community services and 80,099 students.

In the 2011-2012 school year, Conafe coordinated with the Ministries of Education of 16 states to share this strategy in general education services, serving 3,622 schools, 123,072 students with 1,830 API.

3. Strategies and activities

The API is, generally, a young person with a college degree from a teacher training institution. Also, could be an ex-community instructor with a college degree or just someone interested in participate with a bachelor degree and proved experience teaching basic education. Community work experience is not a prerequisite for the API, but it is essential to have a vocation of service and openness to identify the specific requirements of the beneficiaries of the strategy.

API is defined as a facilitator, tutor or mentor who guides, directs and helps to find resources to solve and output processes of change and educational improvement (Martinez, 2003; Topping, 2000). In general terms, s/he must possess skills to perform duties, which means an organized set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values at stake in a coordinated manner to meet the demands of the context and perform tasks properly (OECD, 2002). In that sense, the API should show in their performance generic professional skills, a result of their training path.

As can be seen in the diagram beside, the API project intends to offer academic reinforcement by conducting interventions that involve students, Instructors and parents. It also aims at impacting the basic education system as a whole by increasing the field experience of college graduates who will be entering the regular education system as private or public school teachers.

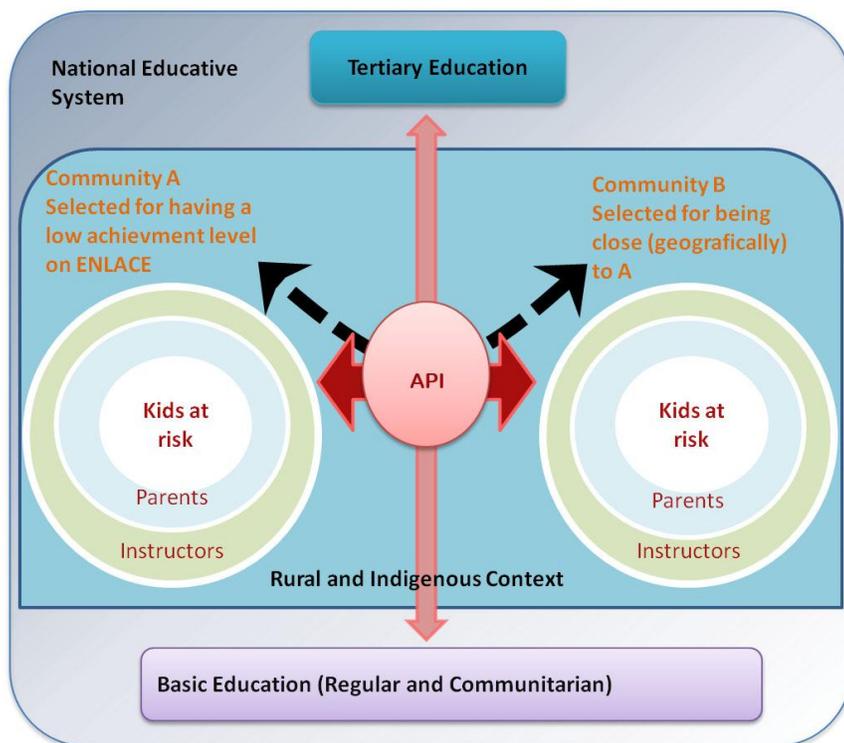


Figure 1: Interactions between communities, education and context⁴

⁴ National Assessment of Academic Achievement in School Centers (ENLACE based on its original name) is a standardized national evaluation that, at the elementary level, is applied to children from third to sixth grade. It is based on the official Language and Math



3.1. Theory of change

API positively affects school performance of children through educational intervention planned and coordinated with students, educational figures and parents, which implies an ecological model that considers all living areas resulting from interactions between the agents involved (Bronfenbrenner, 1987).

The pedagogical model of Itinerant Pedagogical Advisory has a socio-constructivist approach based on the following assumptions:

- It recognizes the central role of the subject in the construction of their own knowledge, so that the fundamental task of the API is to create environments that allow building their own awareness, from their approach to cognitive objects. In that sense, the prior knowledge is a key element in planning learning activities and resources that are meaningful to students, educational figures and parents. API pedagogical actions are characterized by promoting meaningful learning: create the conditions of possibility of linking new learning to previously established cognitive structure. Hence the importance of recognizing the prior knowledge of the learners: to establish the bridges that allow making sense of new developments. Perspectives in this vision have been manifold but "the subject constructs information from what is already known" (Jonnaert, 2001: 10).
- The context largely determines the type of pedagogical intervention. Pedagogical decisions to promote the construction of knowledge should be taken in the different realities that develop counseling.
- The development of skills and learning is possible through interactions in social practices which promote dialogue, cooperation, knowledge mobilization and creation of meaning. The API assumes a role of mediator between the learner and the social practices in which students perform to cause the mobilization of knowledge and skills development (Rogoff, 1993).

Conafe is an agency of the Federal Government, and part of its authority is to investigate, develop, implement, operate and evaluate new educational models that help to expand and improve education. To promote education with equity and quality in isolated communities with greater needs, innovation is a particularly favorable condition, reason why Conafe has developed different innovative programs and community education activities as Itinerant Pedagogical Advisory strategy that joins to improve the learning achievements of students showing performance levels below average and at risk of disapproval or dropouts

Part of the design of the Itinerant Pedagogical Advisory is based on the Finnish model of individualized attention to students. To best suit the needs of each child, the Finns settled systemic detection for learning problems and disadvantages, and apply a series of tests to students, so that "If there are problems in learners will identify and address time : early enough to hit better "(Andere, 2010:66). Children who show greater disadvantages receive specialized classes in regular schools, with teachers who advise them on an individual basis. This scheme allows

curriculum and also evaluates a third subject that varies each year (Environmental Science in 2008, Civic and Ethic in 2009 and History in 2010). Its purpose is to create a unified national indicator that provides comparable information about students' knowledge and skills in those areas of knowledge.



keeping students integrated with the other students and community but always with the advice of a pedagogical advisor. This special teachers are present throughout the school year to provide personalized advice to students, teachers and parents (Paul, 2007), and can serve a number of students not exceeding five.⁵

Another antecedent of Itinerant Pedagogical Advisory is Conafe's project "Educational Residencies for Multigrade Rural Primary School", that was created under the Alliance for Quality Education, as one of compensatory actions for equity in basic education and to the need to improve the learning of children living in highly marginalized communities and studying in multigrade classrooms (Conafe, 2009). In this project, graduates of normal schools and institutions of higher education provided educational support and community service. Each resident:

- Planned the intervention with the teacher
- Developed a diagnostic profile for each student
- Applied remedial activities with children presenting educational backwardness and identified deficiencies in its development
- Supported the educational use of information and communication technologies (TIC)
- Participated in the development of training materials for Spanish and math based on a multigrade approach and shared innovative recommendations to work in groups
- In the community, supported training and participation strategies to the parents in the educational process of their children.

Pedagogical Advisors have obtained results which are reflected in school assessments and ENLACE, as well as declining repetition and dropout. They have also achieved to strengthen teaching skills and to guide parents to involve actively into their children's learning and development. In addition, there have been unanticipated positive side impacts and have given added value to the strategy, among them the following:

- They enhance the learning of students who do not receive personalized advice from the API, since the community instructor implements the strategies and recommendations that allows the advisor to improve learning for all students.
- It strengthens the pedagogical community instructors who do not receive direct support from the API, because the advisor participates in mentoring meetings attended by all instructors in the region, where s/he conducts workshops and training activities. The topics taught API and pedagogical workshops and community instructors provide specific recommendations for working with materials and literature, as well as specific teaching strategies to develop communication skills and mathematics. The meetings promote dialogue, analysis and reflection on strategies for improving learning. On the other hand, in many cases, instructors advised by the API informally share with other educational figures their learning and experiences from the advisory.

⁵ Andere (2010). El éxito en Pisa y más allá comienza en primaria y más atrás. México: Priz Impresos



- It fosters personal and professional development of community instructors. The API, as an experienced college graduate, advises and guides young instructors about how to work up their skills and show them better practices that generates a continuous process of professional development: they share experiences, tactics and new ways to improve their classroom practice.
- It reconstructs the social fabric by promoting inclusive and democratic involvement of all members of the community. Through direct and indirect actions, the API facilitates collaborative work in the community for the benefit of education and improving the quality of life.
- It enriches the training of API, under the experience and the implementation advisory process in the three aspects contribute significantly to the development of their teaching skills.

Although the strategy focuses on the educational aspects of schools, children improve their quality of life by receiving better attention from the instructors and parents, mainly through close communication which fosters emotional development of children, improved hygiene and feeding, as well as the reduction of violence towards them.

Due to the positive results in the implementation of the strategy, the API has joined Conafe as a teacher figure that will enrich institutional contributions in the search for a quality education for all with emphasis on communities that are more economically disadvantaged.

In summary, API is an innovative proposal applicable to any form of basic education, which helps to move towards a quality education with equity. As an innovation program designed and operated by Conafe, has shown advantages to educational services of the regular system.

3.2. Tracking and monitoring mechanisms

To accompany the API educational work in communities, Conafe take actions as:

1. API makes bimonthly reports about their pedagogical intervention in the communities where they are assigned.
2. Reports State Tracking. Referred reports contain relevant details on the implementation and operation of each stage. Each of the reports has an established scheme and covers a period of strategy execution.
3. Monitoring communities. For actions prey monitoring visits by Operation and Monitoring Coordinators, Academics and Regional coordinators or trainers guardians to advise their respective APIs in educational services.



Through monitoring, Conafe has been improving implementation of the strategy, as well as educational content of the support materials.

3.3. Evaluation Mechanisms

Conafe has established evaluation mechanisms for different levels of implementation: national, regional and community. These tracking and monitoring activities are carried out at specific times covering the entire advisory process, and provide relevant information to know what happen during the scholar year.

3.3.1. National Level

The API team carries out various actions to assess the achievements and progress of the strategy, including:

Qualitative Evaluation: It takes place at the end of the strategy with an evaluation workshop where the API presents the results of his/her advice in three areas in order to recover the experiences and lessons learned by the state of the various figures involved.

Focus groups: to know the opinion of the APIs, regarding the operation of the strategy, materials used for their advice, identify strengths and weaknesses and proposals for improvement.

Quantitative Evaluation: Analysis of the results obtained by schools advised in the previous period against the cycle which was addressed by the API, in order to detect the impact of the strategy on the beneficiary schools.

Assessment strategy and beneficiary satisfaction: Application of questionnaires to APIs; community instructors, mothers, parents or guardians, and pupils who received advisory.

All information generated in these analysis processes are compiled into a national report that provides operational and pedagogical recommendations that are incorporated in the following school year. It is also shared with all states to consider the successful experiences in other contexts and improve the implementation in their educational services.



3.3.2. State and regional Level

In order to know the progress in pedagogical work of Conafe's educational figures, states organized "tutoring meetings" involving the API, who present and review their reports and intervention plans with the Academic Coordinator in the region.

Specific topics are selected of these reports during meetings to reinforce training of community instructors (including those not receiving direct support API). In these "tutoring sessions", the API imparts educational workshops and provides specific recommendations to community instructors for working with various materials, as well as teaching specific strategies to develop communication and mathematics skills. These meetings promote dialogue, reflection and feedback.

3.3.3. School and Community Level

At school level, the API performs an analysis of the diagnostic assessment to identify student difficulties that are causing their academic lag. Based on these findings, he/she conducts bimonthly assessment to verify that the intervention is appropriate or whether it is necessary to redesign the intervention plan.

At the end of the school year, the API makes a comparative analysis of results by student to detect the progress and achievements of the advisory that reports to parents and Academic Coordinator.

4. Context

API is instrumented in community primary services, rural and indigenous of Conafe in localities that meet the following criteria:

- Primary Community Services with National Assessment of Academic Achievement of Schools - ENLACE - insufficient achievement greater than 30%.
- With 6 or more elementary students at the beginning of the school year.

Since 2009, according to monitoring reports, this was the context where the APIs started their advisory:

Communities:

- High index of social backwardness
- In some cases, management of indigenous language (in Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Oaxaca and San Luis Potosí recurrently raised the issue of the difficulties associated with the indigenous language)
- Located in remote areas
- Very small classrooms for number of students and few material
- Insufficient training
- High degree of absenteeism in the classroom (because the students help their parents in farm work and home)

Students:

- Poor academic performance (high dropout rates, failure and repetition, and low rates of discharge terminal efficiency of basic education)
- Difficulties in reading comprehension and reflection on language
- Little interest in school activities
- Poor diet (malnutrition)
- Students with special educational needs
- Physical violence, emotional or psychological
- Some students in levels II and III primary school could not read or write

Community Instructors:

- Unstructured planning processes,
- Difficulties in preparing teaching materials or to use Conafe's materials
- Trouble handling student discipline
- Poor management in the classroom literacy environments
- Lack of domain of the educative programs methodology and academic contents
- Poor engagement with community members

Families:

- Some parents and relatives showed disinterest in their children's learning
- Little support towards children's homework and school activities
- Poor attendance at school events and scheduled meetings
- Some parents did not accept the strategy in your community
- Alcohol problems or conflicts for various reasons (political preference, religious and family situations)
- Absence of a father figure for labor issues (migration)
- Food extreme poverty of some families (they need to involve everyone at work to sustain the household)

5. Resources

The strategy has been funded mainly from budgetary resources allocated to Conafe from local government since its beginnings at 2008 , API main operating expense is for training of advisors, design and development of educational an teaching materials, payment of financial support to advisors, as well as operational assessment.

From 2011, API is a subcomponent of Conafe’s Family and School Project, financed by World Bank. Thus, part of the goal has been financed by this organism until June 2013. Since then, API resources are provided completely by Mexican government, including 2, 099 API will be in Conafe’s services and 944 API in basic education general schools.

6. Developments over time

During the first three years of implementation of the strategy, the API developed the intervention in primary and secondary level community services and in some cases “shared classroom⁶”. As of the 2011-2012 school year according to the results of the learning of children in the greatest impact was achieved in the primary level, it was decided to focus the API intervention at this level.

In 2012 - 2013, Conafe extended API attention to third-grade students in preschool, in case there was preschool level in assigned communities. The third grade students are attended by API to achieve the skills of the learning expected as the graduate profile of this educational level and transit to the next educational level in a most successful way.

The following table shows the development of the strategy, in the five years it has been operating:

Table 1: Development over time

Concept	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year
	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012 APIS COMMUNITY SERVICES	2011-2012 APIS GENERAL EDUCATION	2012-2013 (COMMUNITY SERVICES)	2013-2014 APIS COMMUNITY SERVICES	2013-2014 APIS GENERAL EDUCATION

⁶ Shared classroom: preschool and primary level sharing the same classroom

* Approximate

Participant States	1	11	14	14	16	31	31	8
API Achieved Goal	102	222	554	557	1,830	1,980	2,099*	944*
Number of Schools	206	478	1,139	1,114	3,622	3,906	4,198*	470*
Students	1,380	6,343	15,279	14,548	123,072	42,549	50,000*	8,000

* Goal set at the beginning of the school year

7. Future Steps

While the strategy has secured its primary implementation services, this year started a pilot project in some secondary schools in different states as San Luis Potosí or Yucatán. These schools are selected for its high dropout rate and failure. The selected APIs have particular expertise in telesecondary, spanish or math. This pilot project will be closely monitored and evaluated by comparing results with a control group of 10 communities with the same features that are benefited (single instructor, low academic performance, etc.)

In 2013-2014 school year, federal resources —from another less successful actions— were reoriented for the strategy to be implemented again in primary schools multigrade of regular system, where API work with qualified and experienced teachers but with the main problems identified (low academic performance, etc.). The goal set by the end of the school year is 944 API.

8. Possible factors that impede success and spread of the initiative

The main factor preventing expansion of the strategy is the lack of resources and the consequences of the lack of them. By this, we mean that more resources are needed to 1) expand the goal 2) increase support for young people to participate as API (not changed since 2008 that initiated the strategy) 3) give more field tracking 4) increase training time to APIs and their trainers, among others.



Another situation affecting the country is the growing insecurity in all states that difficult to move freely on the roads and paths that reach the communities and hinders supporting children most require the support of this strategy.

9. Source information

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