



Itinerant Pedagogical Counsellors (API)

## **Monitoring Note 2**

Submitted for Strand 3 of the Innovative Learning Environments Project (ILE)

The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the OECD or of its member countries.

## Itinerant Pedagogical Counsellors (API)

# Monitoring Note 2

Faced with the persistent educational inequalities that prevent children and adolescents from completing a high quality basic education, the National Council for Educational Development (*Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo* - CONAFE) took up the challenge, which fell within its powers, of refocusing the institution's efforts to guarantee quality learning for the most disadvantaged children and adolescents in society under equal conditions through the implementation of optimal pedagogical intervention strategies.

To achieve this, it designed the Itinerant Pedagogical Counselling (*Asesoría Pedagógica Itinerante* - API) strategy, which began in the 2008-2009 academic year with the aim of improving the learning of the most underperforming children in highly or very highly marginalized areas through a personalized counselling system.

The API initiative takes its inspiration from the Finnish personalized student care model, which provides for systematic detection of learning difficulties and disadvantages for the purposes of developing strategies tailored to the needs of each child. Based on this successful experience, CONAFE had to adapt its proposition by factoring in the specific context of community services, characterized by a multi-grade model assisted by young adults (insert LEC characteristics here), in order to fit the design scope stated below.

The API design provides for the pedagogical intervention of a teaching professional whose role is to support and assist children's learning with the aim of reducing academic underperformance, reinforcing the practices of the Leaders for the Education of the Community (*Líderes para la Educación Comunitaria* - LECs), and offering guidance to parents in the interests of facilitating their dynamic and collaborative participation in their children's education.

## 1. Key Changes to the Strategy

### a. Goals

As a result of the strategy's follow-up, monitoring and operational assessment in the field, the proposal was made to rework the goal every academic year while maintaining its core essence of pedagogical intervention. By defining the overall goal with greater precision, we could determine the scope and nature of the strategy with greater clarity in each of the following aspects:

- Improved learning of primary school pupils with the most marked academic underperformance; counselling provided to educational figures to strengthen classroom processes, and the participation of parents in their children's education.
- Profiling of the Itinerant Pedagogical Counsellor as a decisive factor in achieving strategy results.
- Focus on API intervention in primary education as the basis for improving learning achievement in all areas of schooling that form part of the basic education curriculum.
- Focus on API intervention in the development of communicative and mathematical skills.
- API participation in bimonthly mentoring meetings to share pedagogical strategies and experiences with educational figures that do not receive counselling for the purposes of strengthening their training.

Moreover, the modifications made to the strategy's goals and the various implementation processes were the result of the horizontal collaboration work of all agents involved, in the central offices and state agencies of the National Council for Educational Development; all opinions, recommendations and observations were documented, organized and factored in to refine the pedagogical model for the implementation of Itinerant Pedagogical Counselling.

## **b. Alignment with Current Education Policy**

Since December 2012, Mexico has had a new Federal Government administration and therefore a new National Council for Educational Development. The Itinerant Pedagogical Counselling strategy is valued by the new CONAFE authorities as a public policy exercise aimed to guarantee inclusion and equality in the community teaching model, and as an invaluable pedagogical support for Leaders for the Education of the Community<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Formerly known as Community Instructors.

Mexico's new education policies are set forth in the 2014-2018 National Development Program - specifically in the National Goal: Mexico with Quality Education. Strategy 3.1.5, in particular, sets out to reduce school dropout rates, to improve graduation efficiency rates at all levels of education, and to increase the rates of transition between one level and another. In this respect, two lines of action are defined:

- To extend tutoring support systems with the aim of reducing student dropout rates and promoting the timely completion of studies.
- To set up support programs for students with educational difficulties to encourage students to develop good study habits.

This guiding document gave rise to the 2013-2018 Sectoral Program for Education, published in the Official Journal of the Federation on December 13, 2013.

This Program sets forth six goals that will shape the educational actions pursued during this administration, each complemented by its respective strategies and lines of action. CONAFE will concentrate its efforts on Goals 1 and 3.

- Goal 1: To guarantee the quality of learning in basic education and to ensure the comprehensive education of all population groups.
- Goal 3: To guarantee greater education coverage, inclusion and equality among all groups of the population in order to build a fairer society.

Finally, the strategy is framed within Goal 2 of the 2014-2018 Institutional Program of CONAFE, unveiled in May 2014: To strengthen CONAFE's educational services to ensure that children and adolescents remain in school and complete their Basic Education. This goal contributes to the institution's first strategic focus: Educational quality and inclusion.

## 2. Leadership and Partners

Starting from the 2012-2013 academic year, the role of Strategy Operation and Follow-Up Coordinator was created to work with the strategy design, execution and evaluation staff in each Mexican state. There are 46 Coordinators nationwide.

A new loan has been approved by the World Bank for the 2014-15 academic year, which will be used to fund all strategy assistance in the community education services of all 31 Mexican states.

A collaboration agreement is close to being agreed with the National University of Pedagogy (*Universidad Pedagógica Nacional*), one of the universities whose teaching graduates provide CONAFE with the largest number of Counsellors nationwide.

In line with the national education policy, CONAFE has shared the API strategy and its pedagogical intervention model with schools in the National Education System, meaning that 944 counsellors will now assist 1888 schools administrated by the Ministry of Public Education (SEP) across 26 Mexican States during the 2014-2015 academic year using CONAFE funds. For this purpose, specific materials were prepared for APIs under the Basic Education Plan and Programs.

It is important to note that two Mexican states (Hidalgo and Zacatecas) have implemented the API strategy in schools with their own economic resources, thus having decided to invest in the API strategy for the purposes of benefitting more schools and more children, based on the results achieved.

Therefore, CONAFE is taking the leadership in implementing Itinerant Pedagogical Counselling as part of its powers to design innovative strategies that contribute to improving the quality of education.

With the support of the World Bank, the API Impact Assessment began in 2014 and is due to be completed in 2018. The issues to be evaluated include:

- 1) Whether the program impacts on the educational indicators of the children receiving the intervention, the pedagogical practices of Leaders for the Education of the Community, and parental participation in their children's school activities.
- 2) Whether it improves pupils' capacities to regulate their learning, and whether they develop the skills to learn independently and in a group. Effects of personalized attention, favorable learning environments and other aspects. Skills development of the Leaders for the Education of the Community that receive counselling from APIs, improvements in multi-level work and parental skills development.

### 3. Proof of Efficiency and Effectiveness

During the 2013-2014 academic year, **2,099 APIs** assisted **4198 CONAFE-administrated community primary schools**, benefitting approximately 41,000 children. Steps were taken to incorporate **882 new APIs across 1480 primary schools administrated by the Ministry of Public Education in 22 Mexican states**, benefitting 47,000 pupils.

Through the different follow-up and monitoring actions used to identify achievements in CONAFE's pedagogical interventions during the 2013-2014 academic year, we found the following:

#### 3.1 Changes in Learning Environments

##### 3.1.1 State-Level End-of-Year Reports

The state-level reports submitted in August and September 2014<sup>2</sup> highlighted some behavioral changes as a result of the strategy, such as:

#### **Pupils:**

- Improved reading comprehension
- Improved writing skills, with better use of punctuation marks and capital letters
- Posing and solving of basic mathematical problems
- Improved reading and writing of numbers
- Recognition of the positional value of units up to hundreds of thousands
- Classification of fractions
- Analysis of information presented in pictures, tables and charts
- Teamwork
- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence
- Greater pupil participation

#### **Community Education Leader:**

---

<sup>2</sup> Twenty-nine states reported qualitative progress in the implementation of the API strategy

- A good relationship was struck between the LECs and APIs, creating an appropriate synergy for pupils' learning
- Joint planning
- Increased willingness
- Creative development
- Preparation of materials to achieve set goals

#### Parents:

- Greater engagement with their children, providing them favorable conditions in which to continue their studies
- Greater involvement in the educational processes of pupils through workshops and homework

### 3.1.2 Focus Groups

In June 2014, focus groups were conducted to find out the opinions of APIs in relation to the operation of the strategy, the implementation of learning materials used during counselling, the identification of strengths and weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement.

In these focus groups, conversations were held with APIs with targeted questions posed to help us understand their opinions in relation to the strategy, challenges, actions implemented to improve the strategy, and the benefits they have been given through the meeting.

The states selected by the Directorate for Community Education and Social Inclusion (*Dirección de Educación Comunitaria e Inclusión Social*) to conduct focus groups were: **Guanajuato, Sonora, Veracruz and Yucatán.**

The key observations of counsellors were as follows:

#### Training

- They believe that the training period and issues addressed during training were sufficient.
- It would be good for APIs to be included in LEC training to better understand the Community Education model.
- More information needs to be included on the written language acquisition process for APIs.
- The use of case studies for Counsellors to propose solutions has been suggested for API training.

- Some issues have been requested for inclusion, such as the learning outcomes anticipated by CONAFE, greater detail to be provided on the community education model, and exercises to be conducted that require greater analysis of pupils' learning difficulties (Waterfall model).
- They also mention that they require more forums where they can meet, and specially-designed spaces for API mentoring meetings to facilitate tutoring interventions.

### **Community Context**

- They attribute the underachievement of students to family problems, poor diet, lack of parental responsibility, underperformance of LECs and low self-esteem.
- In some cases, LECs have left the program due to the conditions of communities.
- There are some pupils in the higher grades in these communities that are unable to read properly.
- Some families do not supervise their children's learning, despite the recommendations of the educational figures. Communication within families is poor and parents place little value on their children's studies and skills, or are skeptical of the usefulness of what they learn at school.
- Suggestions were also received to the effect that the operation, follow-up and content of support materials for the pedagogical intervention of APIs should be improved, and this will be taken into account for subsequent academic years.

## **3.1.3 Online Questionnaire**

During end-of-year evaluation sessions, the APIs were asked to answer an online questionnaire<sup>3</sup> in groups of five to gather information on community interventions based on the learning evidence of pupils, parents and LECs.

In total, 385 questionnaires were compiled, which gathered the opinions of approximately 1,925 APIs in 18 Mexican states.

The APIs believed their pupils to have shown improvements in the regulation of their own learning, as displayed through their motivation to learn about new subjects, as well as through their increased autonomy and greater self-esteem. This high level of motivation on the part of pupils to learn is evident

---

<sup>3</sup> On the strategy page <http://www.conafe.gob.mx/apis/Paginas/default.aspx>

through an increase in school attendance, classroom participation and a willingness to carry out activities, as well as improvements in their work and tasks submitted.

This change in the pupils could also be observed in parents, who were more open to conversing with LECs and APIs, where they asked about their children's performance in the classroom. They notably provided greater support in their children's homework and attended workshops and other sessions with greater frequency.

Group learning was promoted and parents were encouraged to take part in classroom activities with their children. This strategy fostered a sense of comradeship and teamwork.

In relation to the personalized counselling of underperforming children, the APIs planned creative and enjoyable activities based on the outcomes of the diagnostic assessment carried out at the start of the academic year. They also paid visits to children's homes and gave targeted classes involving specific tasks.

The counselling of LECs helped ensure that learning materials were put to better use in the classroom and that various bibliographical sources were consulted to produce more creative activities and greater integration between LECs and APIs. Visits of Tutor-Trainers and Educational Assistants to the community were leveraged to share experiences and provide pedagogical recommendations and guidance. Some states held collegiate meetings and participated in mentoring meetings to gain an understanding of the progress being made by the APIs in the education services to which they were assigned.

Social media was a useful tool for APIs to keep in touch with colleagues to suggest ideas and strategies based on their findings in the communities. They therefore worked as a group to resolve any issues that arose in their pedagogical interventions with children.

## 3.2 Changes in Learning Outcomes

As part of the procedures for pedagogical intervention, a diagnostic assessment instrument was applied up to the 2013-2014 academic year to determine performance levels and create strategies focused on strengthening pupils' academic performance in the subjects of Spanish and Mathematics. These tests were applied to all primary education services attended by APIs. At the end of the academic year, a results assessment instrument was then applied to evaluate pupils' learning achievement.

The diagnostic assessment is not used for first-grade pupils, since they have just started primary school.

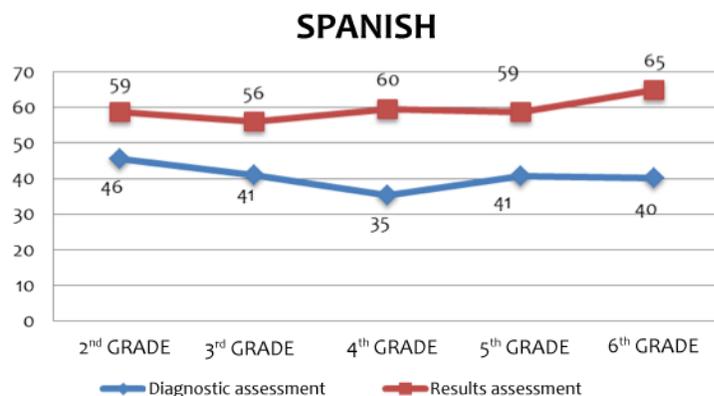
Both instruments were developed in accordance with the content specifications for each level of primary school education, and are grouped into subject areas which enable these assessment instruments to be designed:

- *Spanish*: Reading Comprehension, Linguistic Reflection and Written Expression.
- *Mathematics*: Number Sense and Algebraic Thought, Shape, Space and Measurement, Information Processing.

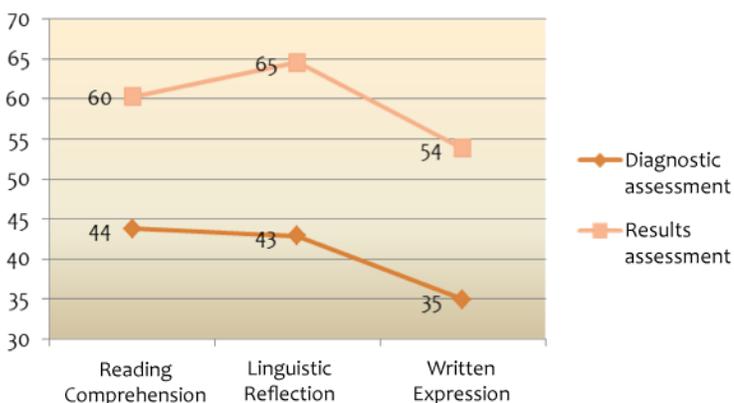
The results outlined below show the difference in percentage points<sup>4</sup> between the percentage of correct answers obtained in the diagnostic assessment, and the percentage obtained in the results assessment. As such, all graphs show the percentage of correct answers obtained by pupils on the Y axis.

### Spanish

Generally, Spanish performance increased by between 13 (second grade) and 25 (fourth and sixth grade) percentage points when we compare the diagnostic assessment with the results assessment.



### Spanish Grammar - Average by core topic

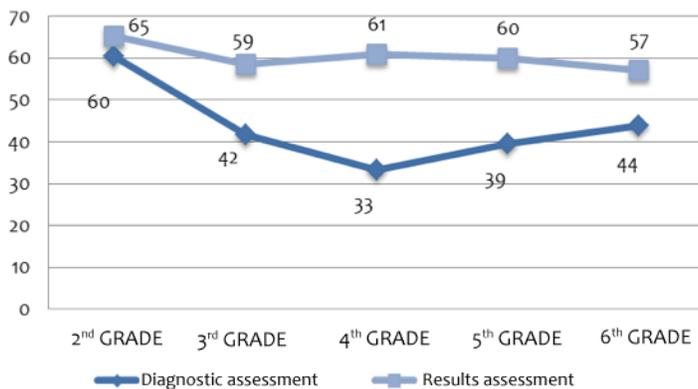


If we analyze each subject area<sup>5</sup> into which the test is divided, we observe that all grades that completed the assessment (second to sixth) increased their numbers of correct answers. This increase ranges from 16 (Reading Comprehension) to 22 points (Reading Reflection). Despite a significant increase obtained for written expression (19 points), pupils continue to record poor results in this area.

<sup>4</sup> The amounts were rounded to the nearest whole number.

<sup>5</sup>

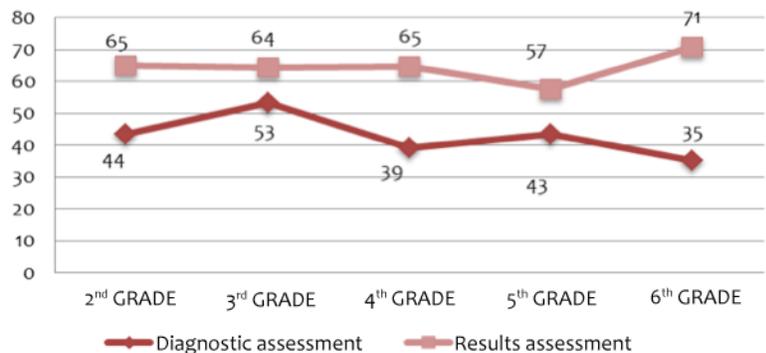
### Reading Comprehension



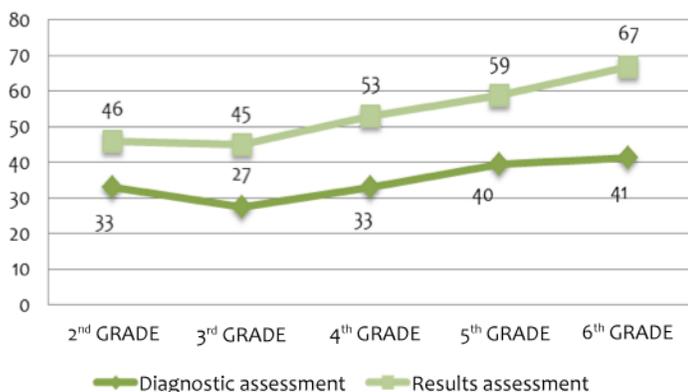
If we analyze each content area by each level, we observe that “Reading Comprehension” saw an increase of between 5 (second grade) and 28 percentage points (fourth grade) when we compare the diagnostic assessment with the results assessment.

On the other hand, “Linguistic Reflection” showed an increase of between 11 (third grade) and 36 percentage points (sixth grade).

### Linguistic Reflection



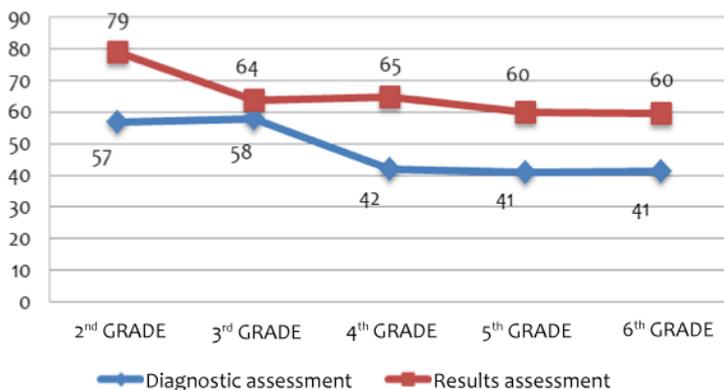
### Written Expression



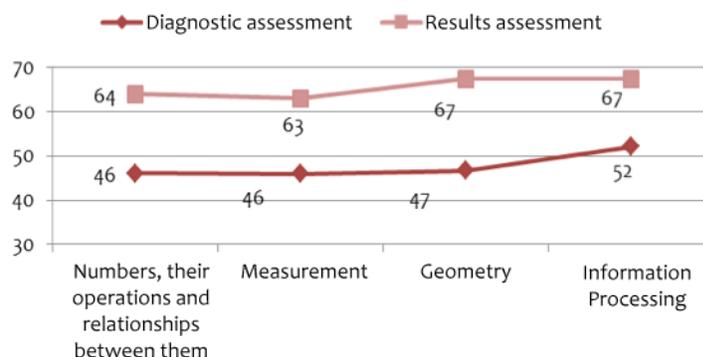
Finally the “Written Expression” subject area produced poor results in the lower grades (second to fourth), although increases did range between 12 (second grade) and 25 percentage points (sixth grade). It was in the sixth grade that the greatest progress was observed.

## Mathematics

### MATHEMATICS

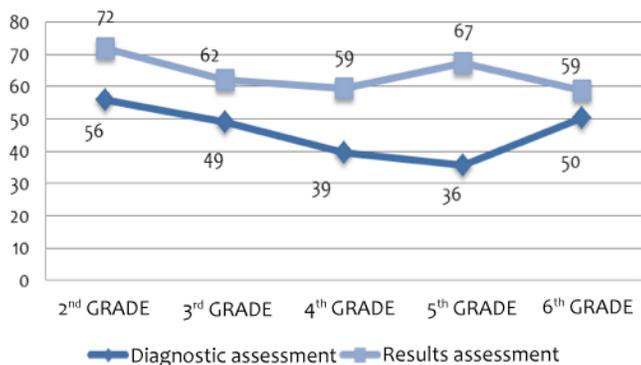


### Mathematics: Average by Core Topic



In the subject of mathematics, increases of between six (third grade) and 22 percentage points (fourth and sixth grade) were achieved. If we look at the progress in each thematic area, pupils of all grades showed improvement in each area, with a higher increase obtained for Geometry (20 points) than Information Processing (15 points).

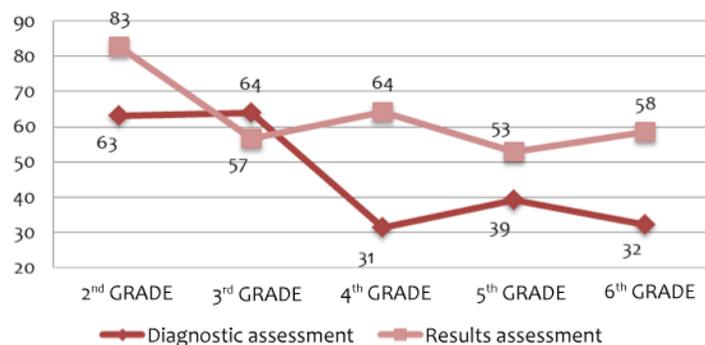
### Numbers, their operations and relationships between them



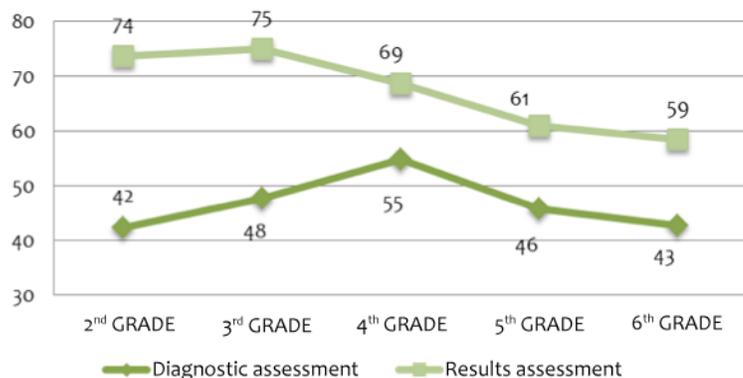
In the subject area of “Numbers, their operations and relationships between them”, we observe an increase of between nine percentage points (sixth grade) and 31 percentage points (fifth grade).

As for “Measurement”, the slowest progress was achieved by third grade pupils (the number of correct answers varied by just 7 points compared to the diagnostic assessment). All other grades showed an increase of between 14 (fifth grade) and 33 percentage points (fourth grade).

### Measurement



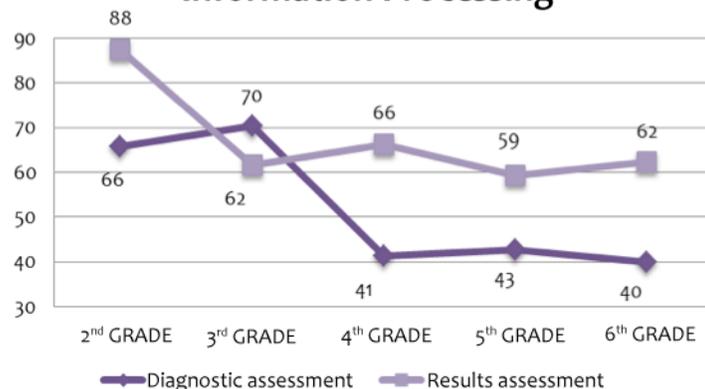
### Geometry



“Geometry” shows an increase of between one (fourth grade) and 32 percentage points (third grade).

Finally, the analysis of the results produced in the area of “Information Processing” shows that, of all grades, third-grade students achieved the smallest increase (eight percentage points). On the other hand, fourth grade obtained the largest increase, of 25 points.

### Information Processing



## 4. Changes and Improvements to Strategy: Theory and Mechanisms

In the 2013-2014 academic year, API participation was consolidated through mentoring meetings held twice a month in CONAFE’s regional centers, which serve as spaces for the training of educational figures in subjects consistent with the children’s education.

The participation of APIs in mentoring meetings strengthens the pedagogical activities of Leaders for the Education of the Community (LECs) that are not directly supported by the API, since the counsellor participates in mentoring meetings attended by all LECs in the region, at which training activities and workshops are held.

The API imparts pedagogical courses and workshops and gives specific recommendations to the LECs for working with teaching and bibliographical materials, as well as providing concrete pedagogical strategies to develop communication and mathematical skills. Meetings facilitate conversation, analysis and

reflection over strategies to improve learning. On the other hand, the API-counseled Leaders informally share their learning experiences gained from counselling with other educational figures.

To achieve better results in recruiting Itinerant Pedagogical Counsellors, a collaboration agreement was signed with the National University of Pedagogy, one of the universities that produces most teaching graduates in the country, which we hope to involve in performing cooperative group activities to develop programs and projects in the areas of teaching, research, provision of social services and professional practices, to facilitate the promotion and extension of the social scope of the functions essentially pursued.

In relation to strategy materials, the API handbook and the pupil follow-up booklet were updated, which contain a record of teacher shadowing activities: Leader for the Education of the Community (LEC) and parental intervention in education. This facilitates the follow-up of API actions and enables achievements to be reported in relation to the strategy's three beneficiaries.

The pedagogical line of intervention was refocused together with Leaders for the Education of the Community, with API playing a facilitating role by shadowing the LEC training process throughout the academic year, the main aim of which is to guide and strengthen the pedagogical practices of LECs in the classroom; particularly in relation to the proper implementation of CONAFE's pedagogical model for community primary education: Discuss and Discover. This is aligned with the training model implemented for LECs, who - we must not forget - are young adults between the ages of 16 and 29, with a higher secondary education, who receive intensive training for a five-week period to enable them to perform education work. The API thus contributes to compensatory education and the implementation of a primary education model (knowledge to excite the process for written language acquisition, and the learning of mathematics and discipline) that facilitates pupils' learning.

Materials were simplified to encourage parental participation with the aim of offering LECs and APIs specific activities that could develop parental skills during the academic year. This change allows a clearer understanding of the tasks of both roles, and enables CONAFE's basic education services to be integrated into activities that relate to families in the community.

## 5. Success Factors

Presently, efforts are being made to meet the goal of achieving equality and quality as quickly as possible, and for the same learning and development possibilities to be offered to all children to help ensure that the knowledge society provides the same learning opportunities to everyone, rather than just to those groups, communities, families and people who have the necessary means to acquire significant and

relevant knowledge. In this context, through the three intervention aspects of the **Itinerant Pedagogical Counselling** strategy: Pupils, Teachers and Parents help prevent education from accentuating disparities between population sectors, which could widen the cognitive breach that is the main obstacle to a global knowledge economy.

The **Itinerant Pedagogical Counselling** strategy joins forces with innovative education programs and actions in the community to improve the learning outcomes of underachieving pupils at risk of failing or dropping out of school.

Positive results have been achieved through the **Itinerant Pedagogical Counselling** strategy, which are reflected in school assessments; the teaching skills of educational figures have also been strengthened, as have the parental skills of parents that have benefitted.

Furthermore, we have observed unforeseen positive collateral impacts that have given added value to the strategy. These impacts include the following:

- There is an improvement in the learning outcomes of pupils that have not received individual API counselling, since the community instructor implements the strategies and recommendations shared by the counsellor to improve the learning outcomes of all pupils.
- The personal and professional development of Leaders for the Education of the Community is promoted. As an education professional, the API encourages the LECs to become involved in a process of ongoing professional development.
- The community's social fabric is rebuilt through the promotion of the active, inclusive and democratic participation of the community's members. The API facilitates group work in the community through its direct and indirect actions, thus bringing benefits to education and quality of life.
- The professional training of APIs is enhanced as their experience and rollout of counselling processes in all three aspects contributes significantly to the development of their professional teaching skills.

Even though the strategy is focused on school education, children achieve a better quality of life as they receive better attention from LECs and their parents through close communication that facilitates children's emotional development, improves their diet and hygiene, and reduces violence between children.

With the strategy's expansion to schools administrated under the national education system, Itinerant Pedagogical Counselling is clearly an innovative proposal that can be applied to any basic education model.

Last, but not least, the follow-up and monitoring work carried out by CONAFE at national and local levels is of great importance.

## 6. Obstacles and Risk Factors for Extending the Initiative

The principal factor stalling the expansion of the strategy is the lack of economic resources. If we had the budget to do so, we would extend the target of education figures in each state, increase financial support for young adults participating as APIs, provide better follow-up in the field, and extend the training periods of APIs and their Follow-Up Coordinators.

APIs sign a voluntary cooperation agreement that does not constitute a labor contract, but instead represents an agreement to provide an education service in the community, for which they receive a financial support amount, which has not increased since 2008. This has evident repercussions on the retention of counsellors, who eventually find better options in the work market and leave the program.

Although positive learning outcomes have been achieved, there will be a more visible impact in the long term, since it is greatly underachieving children that are being attended to.

## 7. Bibliographical References

CONAFE (2012) Modelo de Asesoría Pedagógica Itinerante [Itinerant Pedagogical Advice Model], Mexico: CONAFE

CONAFE (2014). Programa Institucional del Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo 2014-2018 [2014-2018 Institutional Program of the National Council for Educational Development], Mexico: CONAFE

\_\_\_\_\_ (2014b) Lineamientos Normativos y Operativos de la Estrategia Asesoría Pedagógica Itinerante [Regulatory and Operational Guidelines for the Itinerant Pedagogical Advice Strategy], Mexico: CONAFE

\_\_\_\_\_ (2014c) Informe Ejecutivo Asesoría Pedagógica Itinerante ciclo escolar 2013-2014 [Executive Report on Itinerant Pedagogical Advice for the 2013-2014 Academic Year], Mexico: CONAFE

Gobierno de la República (2013), Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2013-2018 [2013-2018 National Development Plan], Mexico: Gobierno de la República

SEP (2013). Programa Sectorial de Educación [Education Sector Program], Mexico: SEP

## 8. Website Evidence

Yucatán: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TmckQ7idSQ>

BCS: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfRdBswhgMQ&feature=youtu.be>

Hidalgo Oficial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eRCJBd6Lsg>