

The Programmatic Improvement Model (APM): Institutionalizing Innovation through Participatory Action Research in Latin America

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the Programmatic Improvement Model (APM) as a structural innovation integrating practice, research, and management within special education. The objective is to demonstrate how Participatory Action Research (PAR) serves as a primary tool for teacher professionalization and institutional management, enabling schools to transition from intuitive practices to evidence-based, sustainable transformations for students with disabilities. The APM is grounded in a triadic social infrastructure: the synergy between school, family, and community. Within this framework, a systematic PAR cycle was implemented (2023–2025) across diverse educational systems in Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico. Methodological rigor is maintained through the longitudinal application of Perkins Quality Indicators. This approach involves school teams in analyzing pedagogical and organizational challenges, turning the school into a space for situated knowledge production and collaborative leadership. The implementation identifies a three-stage roadmap: Initial

Change (adoption of individualized, inclusive pedagogical practices), Transversal Transformation (strengthening institutional autonomy and school-family networks), and Sustainable Innovation (institutionalizing PAR as a permanent tool for continuous improvement). Results highlight the model's scalability in transforming complex public education systems. By articulating the school-family-community alliance with a rigorous research-action framework, educational managers can bridge the gap between classroom reality and systemic policy. This model provides a validated, cross-border strategy for institutionalizing innovation and fostering a culture of professional excellence in complex inclusive environments.

Keywords: APM, Participatory Action Research (PAR), Institutional Management, School-Family-Community Alliance, Educational Professionalization