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Pedagogical Change from the South: The Emergence of Alternative and Decolonial Models in Ibero-America

Zmiana pedagogiczna z perspektywy Południa:
Powstawanie alternatywnych i dekolonialnych
modeli w Ameryce Łacińskiej

ABSTRACT

This article explores the emergence of pedagogical models (PMs) in Ibero-America that challenge traditional Eurocentric paradigms and articulate alternative, decolonial approaches to education. Based on a critical review of the 100 most cited documents in Spanish available on Google Scholar containing the term *modelo pedagógico*, the study identifies key characteristics, dimensions of change, and ruptures proposed by these models. The analysis adopts a qualitative content approach grounded in hermeneutic and deconstructive principles, allowing for the classification and critical examination of PMs as epistemic, social, and institutional constructs. The findings indicate that emerging PMs are rooted in contextual and situated knowledge, influenced by epistemologies of the South, and committed to social transformation and educational justice. These models advocate a shift away from vertical, standardized logics toward horizontal, participatory, and plural epistemic frameworks. However, tensions between discourse and practice persist, particularly with regard to

KEYWORDS

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SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

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implementation, conceptual clarity, and the continued influence of Eurocentric frameworks. The article concludes by emphasizing the need for further research on locally grounded models and participatory methodologies that legitimize diverse forms of knowledge and pedagogical practice in Ibero-America.

ABSTRAKT

W artykule poddano analizie powstawanie modeli pedagogicznych (MP) w Ameryce Łacińskiej, które podważają tradycyjne, eurocentryczne paradygmaty i formułują alternatywne podejścia dekolonialne w edukacji. Na podstawie krytycznej analizy 100 najczęściej cytowanych tekstów w języku hiszpańskim dostępnych w Google Scholar, zawierających termin „modelo pedagógico”, zidentyfikowano charakterystykę i zakres zmian oraz „pęknięcia” proponowane przez te modele. Badanie zostało oparte na jakościowej metodzie analizy treści, zainspirowanej zasadami hermeneutycznymi i dekonstrukcyjnymi, pozwalającymi sklasyfikować oraz sproblematyzować modele pedagogiczne jako konstrukty epistemiczne, społeczne i instytucjonalne. Wyniki badań wykazują, że nowe MP są uwarunkowane wiedzą kontekstualną, pozostającą pod wpływem epistemologii Południa, oraz zaangażowane w transformację społeczną i sprawiedliwość edukacyjną. Modele te proponują przejście od hierarchicznych i standaryzowanych logik do podejść horyzontalnych, uczestniczących i epistemicznie pluralistycznych. Niemniej jednak nadal utrzymują się napięcia między dyskursem a praktyką, zwłaszcza jeśli chodzi o wdrażanie tych modeli, ich klarowność koncepcyjną oraz oddziaływanie podejść eurocentrycznych. Artykuł kończy się zachętą do prowadzenia dalszych badań nad lokalnie ugruntowanymi modelami oraz metodologiami uczestniczącymi, które legitymizowałyby różnorodne formy wiedzy i praktyki pedagogiczne w Ameryce Łacińskiej.

Introduction

Although the origins of pedagogical models (PMs) are not clearly defined, Correa and Pérez (2022) suggest that their basic conception emerged between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries through the philosophical contributions of Herder, Hegel, Kant, and Herbart. Their discursive and practical value has enabled the regulation of social life and has come to express the culture of a given time

and place. Given their significance, as well as the complexity of their dimensions and characteristics, PMs have raised questions regarding their implementation and evolution, particularly in light of factors such as digital technologies (DT), cultural diversity, and shifts in the social context.

In contemporary educational settings, PMs function not only as organizational frameworks for teaching but also as discursive constructs that encapsulate worldviews, epistemological approaches, and social projects. Traditionally associated with Eurocentric paradigms and hierarchical structures of knowledge, PMs have often perpetuated homogenizing logics in highly diverse contexts. However, in Ibero-America, a region shaped by historical processes of colonization, inequality, and exclusion, pedagogical alternatives have emerged that challenge these hegemonic frameworks and give rise to new educational rationalities.

These alternative models, although not always explicitly labeled “decolonial,” are informed by epistemologies of the South, community-based knowledge, situated experiences, and critical pedagogies. Their transformative potential lies not merely in the incorporation of innovative methodologies but in their capacity to redefine educational aims, reconfigure pedagogical relationships, and interrogate the institutional structures of education systems. In this regard, emerging PMs constitute spaces of both symbolic and material contestation, in which differing conceptions of the subject, knowledge, and society are negotiated (De Sousa Santos 2010; Zuluaga 1987).

This article aims to analyze the characteristics, dimensions, and implications of emerging PMs in Ibero-America through a critical review of the 100 most cited Spanish-language documents on pedagogical models indexed in Google Scholar. The analysis seeks to shed light on the tensions between traditional models and those that foster transformation through decolonial, social, and epistemic approaches. This reflection is proposed as a contribution to ongoing debates on pedagogical change in Ibero-America, emphasizing that such change cannot be reduced to instrumental innovation but must instead be understood as an integral and situated reconfiguration of the educational act.

The article is organized into six sections. First, it presents the theoretical framework; next, it describes the methodology used for

the selection and analysis of documentary sources. The results section is divided into three subsections addressing the characteristics of alternative PMs, the dimensions of change they articulate, and the ruptures they introduce in relation to traditional models. This is followed by a critical discussion of the main findings. Finally, the article concludes with a reflection on the challenges, possibilities, and future lines of research concerning situated and decolonial PMs in Ibero-America.

Theoretical framework: Origins of pedagogical models

Pedagogical models (PMs) are representations of educational reality that link theory and practice. They constitute a discursive formation shaped by anonymous and historically situated rules specific to a given time and place, as described by Foucault (1969). The influence of historical periods and cultural contexts is essential in shaping PMs (Correa, Pérez 2022; Díaz 1986; De Zubiría 2007, 2010; Ortiz 2013), highlighting their evolution in response to social, political, economic, cultural, linguistic, and, consequently, epistemic transformations (Behar 2022). PMs aim to articulate contextual and conceptual elements, offering a theoretical explanation of educational practice (Zuluaga 1987) and giving rise to alternative pedagogies that propose different educational options with a forward-looking orientation.

The actors involved in PMs include institutions, individuals, roles, and practices (Foucault 1969), as well as learning objectives (Coll 1994), instructional content, and teaching methods (Ortiz 2013). These components are coordinated in a coherent manner and coexist in an organized structure (Gómez 2004). The outcome of a PM is the establishment of an educational code (Díaz 1986) that prescribes techniques, methods, dynamics, practices, and educational processes (Cardoso 2007; Correa, Pérez 2022; Fornaca 1991) aimed at shaping an ideal human being in accordance with the values of a given society (Zuluaga 1987). According to Carvajal (2006), PMs entail two essential interpretations: one concerning the possibilities of the subject being formed, and another concerning the cognitive input that, once acquired by the learner, constitutes their educational formation.

As a discursive formation, PMs respond to foundational questions that serve as guidelines for their development (Bernal 2004), such as What kind of individual is to be formed? What are the characteristics of the society in question? What is the identity of the students? How do they learn? What content and dimensions should be incorporated into education? What methodological strategies and learning environments are appropriate? De Zubiría (2007) further argues that PMs must address specific pedagogical questions, including why to teach, what to teach, when to teach, how to teach, and, similarly, what, when, and how to assess.

PMs have been classified from various perspectives: epistemic and historical (Lara et al. 2020), theoretical (Flórez 1994), organizational (Backer 2008), and structural (De Zubiría 2007, 2010). Despite their central role in education, there is a notable lack of comprehensive literature reviews on the topic in Spanish, with only a few exceptions (e.g., Hartman 2019). This gap underscores the need for a broad and critical review of the literature on the conceptualization, trends, and emerging forms of PMs from a decolonial perspective.

Decolonial epistemologies in the educational context

Decolonial epistemologies challenge Eurocentric knowledge systems and foreground alternative ways of knowing. They emerged from postcolonial and decolonial studies, which argue that colonialism persists in contemporary forms of domination (de Sousa Santos 2021). These approaches challenge the “coloniality of knowledge,” asserting that Western epistemology has been imposed on the global periphery, thereby perpetuating sociopolitical domination (Chambers 2020).

In educational contexts, decolonial epistemologies have significantly influenced pedagogical practices in postcolonial educational systems in Latin America and Ibero-America. By challenging Eurocentric epistemologies, decoloniality seeks to dismantle entrenched colonial frameworks and champion intellectual diversity (Omodan 2024). Latin American universities, historically shaped by external narratives, are undergoing processes of decolonization through curricular reform and changes in teaching practices. This involves recognizing and integrating Indigenous knowledges to counter the

marginalization of non-Western perspectives (Goodell 2024). Student movements across Latin America have also played a crucial role in democratizing knowledge and education by advocating for pedagogies of emancipation.

Transforming pedagogical practices in universities involves disrupting established curricula to include diverse perspectives and moving away from the hegemony of Global English and colonial narratives embedded in national educational agendas. Additionally, decolonial education seeks to counter “science for domination” by challenging neoliberal values in mainstream science education (Kato et al. 2023). Active methodologies in higher education enhance practices for the resignification of learning and serve as tools for deepening understanding. The integration of Indigenous artisan community engagement in design programs exemplifies decolonial education and processes of knowledge co-production (Maya Tapiero et al. 2024). Another practice involves critical interculturality as a framework for understanding social relations, which contributes to decolonial studies in Latin America by valuing cultural diversity and addressing power imbalances and regional particularities.

Decolonial epistemologies have also had a considerable impact on educational systems. Initial teacher education programs increasingly link decolonial pedagogical practices with social, political, and insurgent interventions in public spaces. This involves moving away from Eurocentric epistemological logics while building technical and professional knowledge among university students (Moreno-Doña et al. 2019). Nevertheless, it is important to consider structural problems associated with social justice and human rights in order to improve educational leadership and promote equity.

Decolonial approaches return to local knowledge through a systematic perspective that revalorizes ancestral contexts in order to recognize and validate knowledge emerging from resistance to Eurocentric domination, promoting an “ecology of knowledge” that incorporates perspectives from marginalized groups (Radvanskei, Silva 2020). This approach seeks to overcome the limitations of dominant epistemologies and to foster a more inclusive understanding of human knowledge and experience.

Despite this progress, challenges remain in fully transforming educational systems; addressing academic colonialism and

marginalization requires careful engagement with postcolonial and decolonial debates. This involves integrating diverse theories and perspectives to create holistic and decolonizing learning experiences (Shabbar, Sorby 2025). In this line of thought, it is necessary to further explore how decolonial approaches are represented and discussed in the literature on pedagogical models.

Methodology

Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to examine how the concept of the “Pedagogical Model” (PM) is addressed in Spanish-language scholarly literature, with particular attention to how emerging PMs in Ibero-America shape forms of educational change that challenge traditional frameworks and promote new, contextually grounded pedagogical rationalities from a decolonial perspective.

The research questions guiding this inquiry are as follows:

1. What are the defining characteristics of alternative and decolonial PMs as identified in contemporary Ibero-American literature?
2. What dimensions of change—such as social, epistemic, or institutional—do these models articulate in response to contexts marked by inequality, exclusion, or emergency?
3. In what ways do these models represent a rupture with traditional pedagogical paradigms, and what implications do they hold for educational transformation in the Ibero-American region?

Literature review

Although this study does not adopt a systematic review protocol, it follows a structured literature review approach as proposed by Regmi (2023). This method allows for a more flexible systematization of sources, enabling the inclusion of valuable contributions that might otherwise be excluded by rigid methodological filters. In addition, the review focuses on the popularity and citation frequency of scholarly

articles, a strategy also adopted in previous studies (e.g., Castañeda, Tur 2020; Li et al. 2022). Popularity is used here as an indicator of relevance and theoretical influence, reflecting how frequently specific works are cited within a given thematic field. For this reason, Google Scholar was selected as the primary database for source retrieval, as it is widely used as an information search tool (Cathcart, Roberts 2014) and has seen increasing application in systematic literature reviews (Haddaway et al. 2015). Its open-access nature also makes it a widely accessible platform for literature selection (Di Martino et al. 2023).

Source selection

The keyword *modelo pedagógico* was used to search Google Scholar, yielding approximately 152,000 results. In line with the recommendations of Haddaway et al. (2015), particular attention was paid to the first 200 to 300 entries, which are typically the most cited and visible. For the purposes of this study, the 100 most cited documents were selected for in-depth review. No exclusion criteria were applied based on publication year, document accessibility, or inclusion in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR). Language, however, was considered. Since the study focuses on Spanish-language literature, three sources written in Portuguese were excluded. To maintain a total of 100 documents, three additional sources from the top 200 results were included as replacements (Table 1).

Table 1. Methodological steps for integrative review

Integrative review steps	Actual process followed for writing this paper
Step 1: Formulate the research purpose	To examine how emerging PMs in Ibero-America shape forms of educational change that challenge traditional frameworks and promote new, contextually grounded pedagogical rationalities from a decolonial perspective.
Step 2: Integrative literature search	Databases used: Google Scholar Search terms: “modelo pedagógico” Timeframe: unrestricted Selection: top 100 most cited references
Step 3: Literature selection and quality appraisal	Initial number of records: approximately 152,000 (from Google Scholar). After screening and applying inclusion/exclusion criteria (e.g., exclusion of non-Spanish texts), three documents were removed. To maintain the total sample size, three additional documents were selected from the initial search results, ensuring a final set of 100 documents.

Integrative review steps	Actual process followed for writing this paper
Step 4: Theme development	Coding was conducted using Atlas.ti 9. Key categories and subcategories were defined based on the research questions.
Step 5: Synthesis and finding	The analysis produced a synthesis of pedagogical models in relation to decolonial practices and emerging processes of educational transformation. These findings provide a basis for identifying the implications of PMs in the Ibero-America context.

Source: Author’s own research.

Thus, the term PM was required to appear in the title, abstract, and/or keywords of each document. Data collection was conducted between March and July 2024, and the final selection of documents was completed on August 26 of the same year. Each document was then analyzed and classified according to its specific characteristics.

Analysis of results

To analyze the 100 documents selected for this review, a qualitative content analysis was conducted, guided by hermeneutic and deconstructive principles. This approach made it possible to identify the explicit definitions of PMs as well as the underlying tensions, omissions, and ideological orientations embedded in the texts. The analysis was aligned with the study’s critical and decolonial perspective and involved a purposeful reading aimed at uncovering discursive practices that either reproduce or challenge traditional epistemic structures.

An analytical matrix was developed based on both emergent and deductive categories: type of document, educational level, discipline, integration of DT, explicit use of the term “pedagogical model,” theoretical foundation, epistemological orientation, associated dimension of change (social, epistemic, or institutional), and the degree of innovation or rupture with traditional models. These categories were derived from previous literature (e.g., Correa, Pérez 2022; De Zubiría 2007; Flórez 1994) and refined following an exploratory reading of the first 20 documents. The analysis unfolded in three phases:

- Initial coding and segmentation: each document was read in full, and units of meaning related to the conceptualization,

implementation, critique, or proposal of PMs were identified. Relevant excerpts were coded to capture the characteristics, purposes, and structural components of the PMs discussed.

- Thematic grouping and synthesis: based on the coded data, thematic clusters were formed, enabling the identification of recurring patterns and singular cases. This phase made it possible to trace the emergence of alternative models, their relationship to epistemologies of the South, and their transformative potential in contexts marked by exclusion or inequality. In addition, documents were categorized according to the type of change proposed: technical, structural, symbolic, or epistemic.
- Interpretive analysis and argumentative construction: in the final phase, the findings were interpreted in light of the theoretical framework, linking the analysis to broader debates on critical pedagogy, decoloniality, and educational justice. Particular attention was paid to silences, ambiguities, and instrumental appropriations of the PM concept in order to avoid its fetishization or uncritical use.

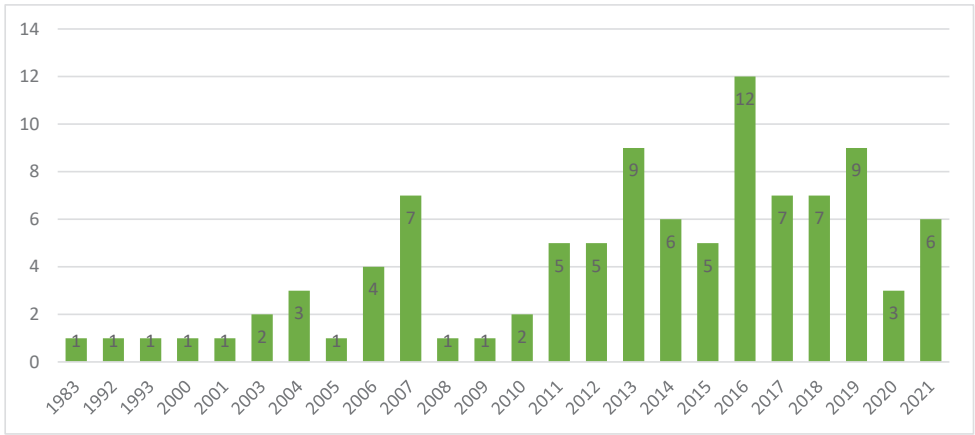
This approach enabled the classification of the identified models as well as a critical examination of their construction and discursive circulation within the Ibero-American educational field. In addition, a complementary quantitative analysis was carried out to represent the frequency and distribution of variables such as country of origin, type of document, and academic discipline, thereby offering a panoramic view of the current state of the literature on PMs.

Results

General overview

The documents analyzed span the period from 1983 to 2021, with a notable concentration of publications between 2013 and 2019. The year 2007 also stands out as particularly prolific (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Year of publication of the analyzed documents



Source: Author's own research.

The countries with the highest number of publications are Colombia ($n = 29$), Spain ($n = 17$), and Cuba ($n = 17$). These data also include inter-institutional collaborative projects (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution by country of origin

Independent Productions	N	Collaborative Productions	N
Colombia	29	Colombia – Spain	2
Spain	17	Cuba – Mexico	2
Cuba	17	Argentina – Spain	1
Mexico	7	Chile – Cuba	1
Chile	5	Colombia – Cuba	1
Venezuela	4	Colombia – Venezuela	1
Ecuador	3	Costa Rica – España	1
Costa Rica	2	Ecuador – Perú	1
Perú	2	Spain – Argentina	1
Brazil	1	Argentina – UNESCO	1
		Mexico – Spain	1
		Germany – Costa Rica	1
Total	86	Total	14

Source: Author's own research.

Regarding the types of documents analyzed, theoretical ($n = 48$) and empirical ($n = 42$) studies predominate. In addition, there are reflective texts ($n = 7$), one essay, one state-of-the-art review on PMs and DT, and one book addressing diverse perspectives on PMs (Table 3). Master's and doctoral theses and reports account for 13% of the documents, while 5% are books. The remainder are academic journal articles.

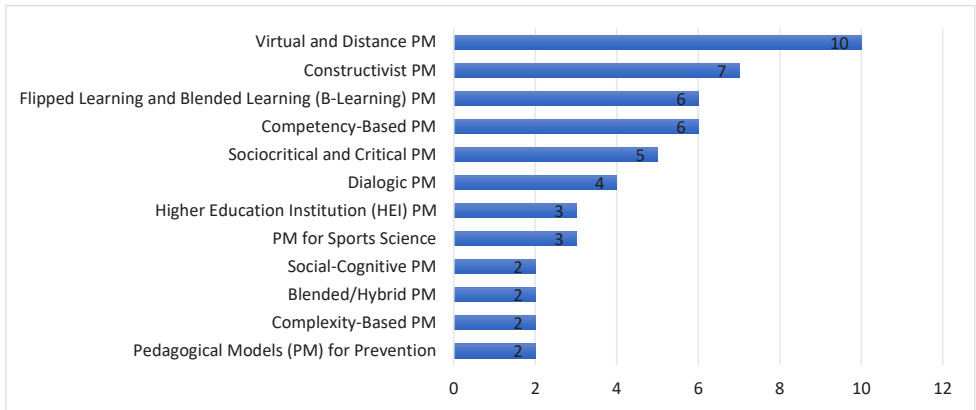
Table 3. Types of documents on PMs

Type of document	Description (N)
Theoretical	Development and proposal of PMs ($n = 11$); PMs related to vocational education, higher education, meaningful learning, professional practice, holistic education, and didactics ($n = 8$); PMs in various disciplines ($n = 7$); PM concept ($n = 5$); methodology design ($n = 5$); document review ($n = 4$); PM descriptions ($n = 2$); theoretical foundations ($n = 2$); critical PM ($n = 1$); classification proposal ($n = 1$); PM management ($n = 1$); PM implementation ($n = 1$).
Empirical	Development of PMs ($n = 15$); characterization and conceptualization ($n = 5$); PM implementation ($n = 5$); PM proposals ($n = 5$); evaluation of PMs ($n = 4$); application of Flipped Learning ($n = 2$); teacher training and PMs ($n = 1$); student/teacher perceptions ($n = 4$); PMs and educational spaces ($n = 1$).
Reflective	Reflections on PMs ($n = 3$); conceptual analysis ($n = 2$); Jesuit PM ($n = 1$); implications for school dropout ($n = 1$).
Other	Essay ($n = 1$); state-of-the-art review on PMs and DT ($n = 1$); miscellaneous ($n = 1$).

Source: Author's own research.

Due to the specific purposes for which PMs are designed, they are often named according to their mode of implementation (e.g., virtual or hybrid) or pedagogical orientation (e.g., constructivist). Others are classified based on typologies proposed by researchers such as De Zubiría (2007) and Flórez (1994) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Most frequently referenced PMs (n = 52)



Source: Author's own research.

However, additional PMs were identified using other criteria, including the educational level at which they are applied (n = 6), the pedagogical approach (n = 8), the disciplinary field in which they are implemented (n = 10), the institution in which they are applied (n = 7), and the educational objectives they aim to achieve (n = 9). Notably, nine documents did not specify the name of the PM used or proposed (Table 4).

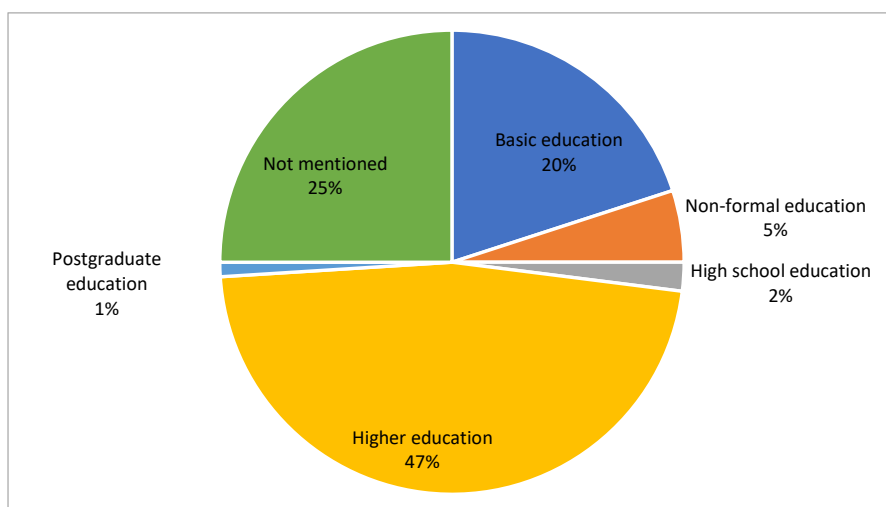
Table 4. Classification of PMs by Educational level, Pedagogical current, Discipline, Institution, and Objective (n = 39)

Classification	Model name (examples)
Educational level	Adult popular education PM, Non-formal education PM, Multigrade school PM, Preschool PM, Telesecundaria PM, Primary education motivation PM
Pedagogical currents	New School PM, Post-constructivist PM 2.0, Socio-constructivist and Connectivist PM, Traditional PM, New PM, Cognitive and Cultural PM, Southern Epistemology PM, Student-centered PM
By institution	UNA PM, Antonia Santos Institution PM, Jesuit PM, SaludARTE Program PM, Salesian PM, JAR PM, ISCED PM
Disciplinary	Legal Clinic PM, Computer Science PM, Environmental Education PM, Nursing PM, Obstetrics and Gynecology PM, Future Professionals' Training PM, Values Education PM, Life Project Education PM, Culturally Relevant Education PM, Inclusion PM
By objective	PM and Architectural Space Design, Student Empowerment PM, Cultural Identity PM, Youth Empowerment PM, Practice-based PM, Integrative PM, Pentadimensional PM, Conscious Processes PM, Axiological Transcendence PM

Source: Author's own research.

With respect to the integration of DT, 43% of the analyzed PMs do not incorporate any form of DT, whereas 56% do. This pattern points to the growing significance of DT in the design and implementation of PMs. Furthermore, the term PM is explicitly mentioned in 47% of the documents, while 52% do not refer to the concept directly. This observation may have important implications for the development of empirical, reflective, and theoretical proposals. Educational level also appears to be a determining factor in defining PMs (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Educational levels targeted by PMs.



Source: Author's own research.

Disciplinary focus also plays a crucial role. While some PMs are linked to specific fields of knowledge, others are developed in a more general manner without a defined disciplinary emphasis ($n = 54$) (Table 5).

Table 5. Knowledge areas where PMs are applied

Knowledge area	Topics
Physical-Mathematical and Earth Sciences ($n = 4$)	Experimental Sciences ($n = 2$), Computer Science ($n = 1$), Mathematics ($n = 1$)
Health and Medical Sciences ($n = 9$)	General Health Sciences ($n = 4$), Nursing ($n = 2$), Medicine ($n = 1$), Pediatrics ($n = 1$), Obstetrics and Gynecology ($n = 1$)

Knowledge area	Topics
Humanities and Behavioral Sciences (n = 16)	Behavioral Sciences (n = 1), Civic Education (n = 2), Juvenile Justice (n = 1), Teacher Training (n = 4), Museums (n = 1), Music (n = 1), Pedagogy (n = 1), Virtual Pedagogy (n = 1), Active Pedagogy (n = 1), Life Project (n = 1), Popular Education (n = 1), Rural Education (n = 1)
Social and Economic Sciences (n = 15)	Accounting (n = 1), Legal Clinics (n = 1), Sports Sciences (n = 5), Graphic Design (n = 1), Intercultural Spaces (n = 1), Virtual Studies (n = 1), Equality and Inclusion (n = 1), English (n = 4)
Biotechnology and Agricultural Sciences (n = 1)	Environmental Studies (n = 1)

Source: Author's own research.

Characteristics of alternative and decolonial PMs in Ibero-America

The analysis of the 100 most cited Spanish-language documents on PMs reveals a set of proposals that, rather than reproducing traditional structures, configure critical, situated, and alternative frameworks. These models frequently go beyond the mere description of techniques or methods; instead, they are conceived as epistemic and political commitments in response to historical conditions of inequality, exclusion, and the colonization of knowledge (De Sousa Santos 2010; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, González-Faraco 2021).

Several models emerge from epistemologies of the South, centered on the re-signification of educational experience as a collective, contextual, and emancipatory process. These models reject technocratic or standardized approaches and instead assume an explicit commitment to social transformation and educational justice (Vásquez 2012; Castillo et al. 2008). For example, PMs grounded in community-based and popular education emphasize horizontal teacher–student relationships, the valorization of local knowledge, and active engagement with social issues (Merino 1993; Tedesco 1983). Among the shared characteristics of these models are:

- i. the recognition of context as a structuring axis of teaching;
- ii. the centrality of the subject as an active agent of change;
- iii. an intercultural and decolonial perspective; and
- iv. the integration of affective, ethical, and political dimensions into the learning process (Zuluaga 1987; Inocencio 2016).

These features contrast sharply with traditional PMs, which are often centered on content transmission and rely on homogenizing normative frameworks. Notably, many of these models are not explicitly labeled as “decolonial” or “emergent.” Nevertheless, their theoretical and practical foundations indicate a clear rupture with the modern Western paradigm. Examples include the Cuban inclusive motivation model (Lozano 2015) and PMs aimed at cultural identity formation in Indigenous communities (Vives 2016), both of which incorporate elements of self-management, local worldviews, and ancestral practices.

Furthermore, these models are predominantly found in structurally marginalized contexts, such as rural areas, Indigenous communities, non-formal education settings, and critical literacy initiatives. Rather than conceiving change as a technical adjustment, these approaches understand pedagogical transformation as a historically situated response to systems of oppression (Dussán 2004; Cartuche et al. 2015). Finally, it is important to note that these models do not constitute a unified pedagogy but rather a constellation of heterogeneous approaches that engage with local, communal, and political realities. Their principal contribution lies in shifting the focus of pedagogical change from institutional structures to the lived experiences of educational subjects, thereby opening new horizons for educational reflection and intervention.

Dimensions of change articulated by emerging¹ PMs

The emerging PMs identified in Ibero-American literature propose new ways of conceiving teaching and learning and articulate a multilevel architecture of change encompassing three interdependent dimensions: social, epistemic, and institutional. These dimensions position PMs not as mere didactic reforms but as transformative

1 They are termed “emergent” due to their disruptive and decolonial nature in contrast to hegemonic educational paradigms. Emerging from epistemic peripheries as responses to social crises and the coloniality of knowledge, they propose horizontal, situated, and emancipatory pedagogical frameworks. Their “emergence” reflects a struggle for recognition within a system that has historically marginalized them, though the term itself carries paradoxes: many of these models are ancestral in their contexts yet appear “new” to the dominant academy.

proposals aimed at reconfiguring the educational and cultural foundations that underpin teaching practices (Correa, Pérez 2022; Gutiérrez 2004).

a. Social change: Pedagogy as resistance and emancipation

In the social dimension, these models function as instruments of resistance to historical structures of exclusion. They promote forms of education that is committed to local realities and to the transformation of unjust social conditions. Rather than approaching contexts of rurality, migration, ethno-racial exclusion, or structural poverty through compensatory assistance, these models emphasize the construction of collective pedagogical power (Cartuche et al. 2015; Dussán 2004). Examples include models centered on popular education, community-based learning, and alternative educational spaces, which incorporate principles of justice, solidarity, and reciprocity as central pillars of the learning process (Castillo et al. 2008; Rodríguez, Robaina 2017).

b. Epistemic change: Decolonizing knowledge

One of the most disruptive contributions of these models lies in their capacity to articulate epistemic change. They challenge the monopoly of Eurocentric knowledge systems and represent a shift toward plural, relational epistemologies rooted in experience and collective memory (De Sousa Santos 2010; Medina, Herrera 2017). This transformation involves the integration of Indigenous, peasant, Afro-descendant, and popular knowledge into curricula and assessment practices, leading to a redefinition of what is considered “valid knowledge” within educational spaces. In this sense, emerging PMs not only reconfigure what is taught but also whose perspectives are privileged and for whose benefit knowledge is constructed (Tedesco 1983; Rodríguez-Izquierdo, González-Faraco 2021).

c. Institutional change: Reorganizing educational structures

Although in many cases these emerging models have not been fully institutionalized, they nonetheless propose a reconfiguration of the school order and the logics of educational management. They promote horizontal structures, participatory decision-making among teachers and students, qualitative assessment, self-directed learning, and collaborative curriculum design. These transformations,

documented in the experiences of community schools, rural educational projects, and critical university initiatives, signal a shift in pedagogical authority away from institutional apparatuses and toward educational actors and their territories (Labadi et al. 2016; Sobrino 2014). This type of change is important for understanding how alternative models function as forms of subversive institutional practice (Avendaño 2013; Klimenko 2010).

These three dimensions—social, epistemic, and institutional—do not function in isolation but in deep interdependence. Meaningful social transformation requires the decolonization of knowledge, while epistemic reform demands new forms of institutional organization. Taken together, these dimensions point toward a horizon of radical and systemic change that challenges the very foundations of the modern education system and paves the way for new pedagogical configurations guided by justice, dignity, and the recognition of diversity (Zuluaga 1987; Fernández-Río et al. 2021).

Rupture with traditional models and implications for educational transformation

The emerging PMs identified in this study represent not merely a discursive renewal but a structural rupture with the foundational principles that have historically sustained traditional PMs. This rupture is evident in how learning subjects, educational aims, and knowledge dynamics are conceptualized, implying a profound reconfiguration of the role of the school and educational institutions as a whole.

Whereas traditional PMs have privileged a vertical logic characterized by unidirectional knowledge transmission and the standardization of processes, alternative models are grounded in horizontality, the co-construction of learning, and epistemic plurality. This transformation is reflected in a shift from teaching-centered approaches to meaningful, contextual, and situated learning, in which students cease to be passive recipients and instead become political and cognitive agents in their own formative processes (Avendaño, Parada 2011; Bohórquez-Chacón, Amaya-Torradó 2005).

At the curricular level, these models challenge rigid structures of decontextualized content by promoting dynamic and flexible curricula that integrate community knowledge, local experiences, and non-Western epistemologies (Cartuche et al. 2015;

Rodríguez-Izquierdo, González-Faraco 2021). This curricular openness contests dominant epistemic hegemonies as well as affirms the right of communities to construct their own educational visions, grounded in their worldviews and life projects (Tedesco 1983; De Sousa Santos 2010).

Moreover, the practical implications of this rupture extend beyond the classroom, affecting institutional design, pedagogical relationships, and teacher education. Some studies describe experiences in which the PM is not imposed by academic authorities but instead emerges from collective dialogue among educational actors, including students, families, and communities (Labadi et al. 2016; Merino 1993). In such cases, pedagogical change becomes a means of democratizing educational spaces.

In the realm of educational policy, these proposals critique the tendency to adopt standardized reforms dictated by international agencies or neoliberal agendas. In contrast, emerging models advocate for pedagogies rooted in social context—models that acknowledge historical inequalities and seek to transform the structural conditions shaping the lives of educational subjects (Klimenko 2010; Vásquez 2012).

In summary, the rupture proposed by these models is not merely conceptual; it entails a restructuring of the relationships among knowledge, power, and subjectivity within the educational field. By advancing contextual, relational, dialogical, and emancipatory pedagogies, emerging models offer real possibilities for educational transformation—ones that not only respond to contemporary challenges but also anticipate them from an ethical, plural, and situated perspective (Correa, Pérez 2022; García-Cordero, Buitrago-López 2017).

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a fundamental tension within the PMs analyzed: while some reproduce traditional structures rooted in Eurocentric logics, others emerge as alternative and decolonial proposals that seek to transform educational practices in Ibero-America. This section offers a critical reflection structured around three central axes: the coloniality of knowledge in PMs, the gap between theory

and practice, and the challenges involved in constructing a genuinely emancipatory pedagogy.

First, with regard to the coloniality of knowledge and epistemic hegemony in PMs, the data show that while 56.12% of the models incorporate DT, 43.88% do not. This pattern may be interpreted as a form of resistance to technocratic homogenization (Selwyn 2019). However, the issue goes beyond technology. Most PMs are still grounded in Western paradigms, even when they are labeled as “emergent.” As De Sousa Santos (2010) argues, the coloniality of knowledge manifests itself through the exclusion of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and popular epistemologies, thereby limiting the decolonial potential of these models. For example, only 8% of the identified models are explicitly linked to critical or decolonial pedagogical currents (as shown in Table 3), while theoretical approaches continue to dominate over empirical or reflective ones. It is important to note that coloniality is not merely a historical legacy but a prevailing structure that determines which forms of knowledge are legitimized in education.

Second, a gap is evident between decolonial discourse and pedagogical practice. Although the theoretical framework emphasizes the role of PMs as tools for emancipation (Zuluaga 1987; Correa, Pérez 2022), the findings reveal a significant conceptual dissonance: 52% of the documents do not define what is meant by “pedagogical model,” which suggests a superficial appropriation of the concept. This points to a misrepresentation and dilution of the PM construct within the design and discourse of educational initiatives.

There is also limited institutionalization of decolonial models, such as community-based or Indigenous knowledge-centered models, which rarely extend beyond localized experiences (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, González-Faraco 2021). This reveals a paradox: while traditional models are criticized, hegemonic educational structures, such as rigid curricula and standardized assessment systems, continue to dominate. For instance, the Ignatian PM (Spadaro 2007) and other models developed in religious or university institutions (e.g., the UNA Model [Hernández-Ching 2018]) often reproduce hierarchical power relations, thereby contradicting the principle of horizontality central to the decolonial turn. Genuine decoloniality requires a departure from colonial institutional logics, a challenge that few

pedagogical models successfully meet. This may be partly explained by the close historical and cultural ties with Eurocentric countries such as Spain and collaborative projects that have been developed, as well as the strong academic links established through Latin American graduate students pursuing postgraduate studies in Spain.

On the other hand, the PMs analyzed demonstrate progress across three dimensions: social, epistemic, and institutional, but continue to face structural obstacles, including forms of decolonial tokenism. While many documents reference “interculturality” or “community participation,” they rarely explain how these principles are concretely integrated into classroom practices. Only 10% of the models are disciplinary and explicitly linked to local knowledge. Moreover, although theorists such as De Zubiría (2007) and Flórez (1994) are frequently cited, their classificatory frameworks do not always challenge the underlying coloniality of education, indicating a continued reliance on Eurocentric paradigms.

Given that decoloniality entails a radical rejection of Western universals, including imposed educational models, truly transformative PMs must:

- incorporate epistemologies of the South in a non-tokenistic manner (e.g., quilombola, Mixe, or Andean pedagogies);
- decentralize knowledge production by giving voice to marginalized communities in the design of PMs (Argüello 2016);
- challenge educational neoliberalism, as many so-called “emergent” PMs are co-opted by reform agendas promoted by international agencies.

PMs in Ibero-America thus stand at a crossroads: while some continue to reproduce colonial logics, others, although in the minority, embody pedagogical practices that are truly disruptive. To achieve the goal of promoting new, contextually grounded pedagogical rationalities, it is necessary to deepen participatory research involving community actors, critically examine the fetishization of the “emergent” (since not all alternative models are decolonial), and advocate for educational policies that support situated models, such as those developed in rural or Indigenous contexts (Cartuche et al. 2015). Without a critical stance toward neoliberalism, decolonial PMs risk remaining marginalized.

At the same time, it is important to reflect critically on the role of technological monopolies. The decision to use Google Scholar (GS) as the sole data source for this literature review reveals a fundamental paradox in contemporary educational research: on the one hand, GS is the most widely used and accessible academic platform worldwide (Haddaway et al. 2015); on the other, its algorithms reinforce structural biases that render peripheral and situated forms of knowledge invisible. Searches for “pedagogical model” primarily retrieve what is most accessible in dominant visibility circuits and thereby exclude non-indexed knowledge. Many decolonial, Indigenous, or community-based models are not published in indexed journals but instead circulate in alternative formats such as reports, locally produced pedagogical materials, or oral traditions.

Despite being applied in Latin American contexts, many PMs continue to follow a Eurocentric rhetoric, with only occasional gestures toward epistemologies of the Global South that might revalue local knowledge. Nevertheless, emergent and decolonial PMs in Ibero-America offer a transformative proposal that challenges traditional educational paradigms by prioritizing context, epistemic plurality, and social emancipation. Although their diversity and conceptual richness constitute clear strengths, their implementation faces challenges related to systematization, scalability, and structural barriers. To consolidate their impact, it is essential to strengthen empirical research, promote teacher training in decolonial approaches, and foster educational policies that recognize the cultural and epistemic diversity of the region. These models reshape education as well as open pathways toward a more just and equitable society, in line with the aspirations of epistemologies of the South.

Conclusion

The objective of this research was to analyze how emerging PMs in Ibero-America shape forms of educational change that challenge traditional frameworks and promote new, contextually situated pedagogical rationalities from a decolonial perspective. The study found that in the most cited Ibero-American academic literature, there is a growing presence of PMs that, while not always explicitly labeled as “decolonial,” function as critical and situated alternatives to

traditional models. These models are characterized by their contextual orientation, epistemic plurality, and commitment to social transformation. The analysis also revealed that the dimensions of change articulated by these approaches—social, epistemic, and institutional—do not operate in isolation but are interwoven in ways that question hegemonic educational structures and propose new ways of conceptualizing knowledge, teaching, and schooling.

Among the most significant findings is the diversity of theoretical foundations underlying emerging models, their connection to community-based pedagogies, and their grounding in resistance-driven educational experiences, particularly in rural, Indigenous, and marginalized urban contexts. These models represent a rupture with the vertical and technocratic logic of the modern education system, opening possibilities for reconfiguring curricula, teacher–student relationships, assessment practices, and institutional management. At the same time, a persistent tension was identified between critical discourse and practical implementation, as well as the continued reproduction of Eurocentric theoretical frameworks, even within proposals that present themselves as alternatives.

A limitation of this study lies in its exclusive reliance on Google Scholar as a data source. While this allowed access to highly cited and influential literature and made algorithmic biases visible, it also reproduced certain structural biases inherent in the academic field. Accordingly, future research on decolonial pedagogies should engage with situated pedagogical productions circulating in non-indexed spaces, such as community reports, non-conventional materials, or documents in Indigenous languages. Additionally, the absence of clear and consistent definitions of the concept of the “pedagogical model” in a significant portion of the analyzed documents limited the possibilities for comparative and critical systematization.

These findings open new avenues for research, including: (a) the systematization of decolonial educational experiences led by communities or non-institutional actors; (b) the analysis of decolonial teacher education and its relationship to emerging models; (c) the examination of these models’ impact on curriculum development and educational policy; and (d) the design of critical methodologies for evaluating PMs that incorporate contextual, ethical, and community-based criteria.

In conclusion, emerging PMs in Ibero-America represent a true opportunity for educational transformation, provided that they are understood not as passing conceptual trends but as ethical, political, and epistemological commitments deeply rooted in their territories and the communities that sustain them. Although they face significant structural challenges, from institutional co-optation to epistemic erasure, their existence and expansion reflect an urgent need to rethink the purposes and the means of education in the region. As an exercise in critical reconstruction, this study seeks to denaturalize the concept of PMs, expose their colonial dimension when framed as universal, and contribute to the construction of a more just, plural, and emancipatory educational horizon.

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