Conceptual Cartography of School Safety: School Experiences in Managing the Covid-19 Pandemic in Mexico

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Abstract: This article analyses through a conceptual cartography, school safety, and its association with the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico. The qualitative methodology allowed the identification of a model of safe learning space in Higher Education, which emerges as a proposal to establish safe learning spaces and manage the pandemic. Once this model implemented, it was possible to inform, mobilize, attend to school content and be in confinement, which meant raising awareness of learning in Higher Education in an increasingly changing knowledge society.

Keywords: *School security; COVID-19; Higher Education; Mexico.*

How to cite: Nambo de los Santos, J.S., & Giles Chávez, V. (2020). Conceptual Cartography of School Safety: School Experiences in Managing the Covid-19 Pandemic in Mexico. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*, 12(2Sup1), 86-92. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/12.2Sup1/293>

1. Introduction

The notion of school safety is the result of the evolution of programs focused on school violence in basic education schools. In Mexico, particularly in Mexico City, the conceptual and programmatic change occurred on September 27, 2002, when the Comprehensive School Safety Program was announced (González, 2008). This program conceived to manage school violence and addictions, both of which are serious health problems in the country.

In some areas of Mexico, schools had become a battleground, where teachers and students arrived daily fearing that their physical integrity would be affected. Student transgressions were increasingly far from being just a traditionally sanctioned behavior in the educational field. For this reason, school safety manuals aimed at all educational levels focused on violence and, to a lesser extent, on risk management, such as the prevention of disasters or pandemics, as in the case of H1N1 (González et al., 2011) or, more recently, COVID-19 (Ramos, 2020).

In this sense, the programs to manage school violence that exists in Mexico have points in common: the attempt to satisfy the needs of young students; the development of a supportive, humanistic and cooperative environment; the intention to create positive and lasting relationships between students, teachers, and employees. At the same time, there is an objective to incorporate conflict as a positive tension for the school, as something that can create social cohesion: that is, the school assuming the conflict as a creator of sociability (Nambo et al., 2019).

By carrying a kind of a symbolic load of social trust, the school allows that when professionals apply strategies of security, natural disasters or health contingencies, the scope and possibilities of improvement are greater, adapting the conditions not only locally, but also nationally and internationally, so that the political norms and laws are appropriate to the problems of the context.

We advocate that the school safety actions carried out in the last two decades have enabled us to cover social welfare objectives and to improve the response to disasters and health contingencies, as we have witnessed in COVID-19 Action Guidelines for Public Institutions of Higher Education (Secretariat of Public Education, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to identify the characteristics that define school safety considering examples of Higher Education schools in the state of Morelos,

Mexico to organize and manage the pandemic and to promote healthy coexistence, and safe learning spaces.

2. Methodology

Conceptual cartography is a methodology used for the construction of concepts (Rodríguez-Peralta et al., 2015). The axes of analysis follow each other through a series of guiding questions that construct the central topic to understand it from its inner (subjective) as well as outer (objective) reality. Generally, there are eight dimensions used to behold the concept in a holographic way: notional approach, categorical location, characterization, differentiation, subdivision, linkage, methodology, and exemplification (we omitted differentiation and subdivision in this project because literature did not report it.). The above allows an adequate delimitation of the literature and search for achievements and opportunities in it to generate relevant questions for the scientific community.

The concept that allowed us to problematize the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico was school safety, as seen in Table 1.

3. Results

Table 1. Axis of analysis of the conceptual cartography of school violence

Axis of analysis	Guiding questions	Context of school safety in Mexico
A. Notion The approach of the concept through different definitions related by diverse contexts	What is the current definition of the concept of school safety and its historical development?	The Secretariat of Public Education's School Safety Manual (2012) understands the term school safety as the prevention of risk situations such as rumors of violence in the school environment, confrontation with firearms, the presence of weapons in school, threats and extortion, the risk of explosives and the presence and consumption of addictive substances in school. In this sense, González (2008) details the notion of school security: "...begins with the 1985 earthquake, when civil protection devices, institutions, and agencies created and the so-called 'culture

		of prevention" began to be promoted (González , 2008, p. 35).
B. Categorization Description of the general category of concepts within which the concept at stake is included	Which main category belongs to school safety?	Safety: It is understood as a way to avoid risk, to avoid worrying about something (Waver, 2009): "The new concept of security integrates into practice forms of knowledge and rationality derived from risk analysis, traffic, health, and infrastructure" (Waver, 2009, p. 100).
C. Characterization It describes the essential features of the concept	What are the central elements that give identity to school security?	Based on three pillars (GADRRRES, 2017): 1. Safe educational centers (referring to a safe location, ecological and disaster-resilient designs). 2. Disaster management in schools (disaster management committee with physical, environmental, and social protection). 3. Risk reduction and resilience education (non-formal, extra-curricular and community education, including children in an interactive way and conflict-sensitive education).
D. Associate It points out the relations of the central concept with others that are important from the semantic or contextual point of view.	How is school safety associated with certain theories, social processes, and epistemological references that are outside the categorization ?	School safety is closely related to the management of the pandemic in Mexico. It has involved health care throughout the education sector and preventing the spread of the virus, as well as generating strategies for healthy coexistence and the reorganization of schools with the continuation of online educational tasks. It is worth mentioning that other studies (Nambo et al., 2018) have proven that schools are safe spaces for learning, and in case of health contingencies, schools have acted following health rules to provide a safe space in terms of health

		for the population in general.
E. Methodology It establishes the minimum methodological elements to apply the concept or theory and its link with others	What are the minimum methodological elements that apply to the approach of school safety and its link with other concepts?	The COVID-19 Action Guidelines for Public Institutions of Higher Education (Secretariat of Public Education, 2020) were generated in higher education schools in the state of Morelos. Their objective was to establish the characteristics, organization, and processes for the work of Higher Education Institutions, in the face of the measures of so-called social distancing. With the above, the three pillars of Integral School Security were followed (GADRRRES, 2017), in which it is proposed that the educational sector should function as safe educational centers, manage disasters in schools, and educate for risk reduction and resilience.
F. Exemplification Describes the application of the concept through understandable examples	What could be a relevant and appropriate example of an approach to school safety and its link to other concepts?	All Public Universities in Mexico (March 17-20) made the transition of classes online to prevent students and academics from attending schools. Online contact with students has provided an effective channel of communication and has encouraged the exchange of information to maintain calm, mental health and generate projects during the quarantine.

From the perspective of ensuring the right to education and making educational spaces safe for all, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNDRR, and the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector, GADRRRES (2017), have established several recommendations for disaster risk reduction and resilience in the education sector. Higher education schools in Mexico and specifically in the state of Morelos have made progress on these measures over the past three decades with the effects of natural disasters such as earthquakes, pandemics, and increasing violence. However, it remains a challenge to get schools located in indigenous areas or those whose students

do not have access to a computer or the Internet, especially from the Normal School or the National Pedagogic University, which are the country's teacher trainers colleges.

The health emergency showed a new model of safe learning space that integrates individuals in a common interest, converging ideas, thoughts, criticism, projects, and above all, an exchange of learning for new citizenship training. Likewise, schools as public spaces have had unusual adaptations that demand changes in infrastructure, physical, mental, and even technological and virtual health, which generate an impact on society that educational research has yet to address.

4. Conclusions

The conceptualization of school safety allows for the identification of strategies to organize and manage risks, non-violence, and promote healthy coexistence. School spaces that promote learning face a new challenge: to become spaces that provide healthy coexistence, which include the right to health and guarantee the coexistence of students in spaces that maintain public health care. Although the trend in Higher Education is to offer distance and online courses, there is still an interaction between the people who converge in the educational spaces. However, it is urgent to reorganize the school environment to be prepared for a pandemic such as the one that is emerging, since in societies less favored by ICT, they will be left behind and marginalized. The education system in Mexico has reacted to the demands of this public health crisis and is reorganizing to serve the population by seeking new modes and alternatives to guarantee the right to education and to maintain school safety.

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