

Pandemic, Psychology and Education in Mexico

César Augusto Carrascoza Venegas*

División de Investigación y Posgrado, National University of Mexico, Mexico

***Corresponding Author:** César Augusto Carrascoza Venegas, División de Investigación y Posgrado, National University of Mexico, Mexico.

Received: January 30, 2021; **Published:** February 27, 2021

Abstract

In this brief work, a review is made of the serious effects of Covid-19 in Mexico, its impact on health, the economy and other areas of crucial importance in the life of the country. Some of the political factors responsible for the intensity of the pandemic are mentioned and the expressions of discontent in the population are analyzed. It is also discussed that the great neglect in education for decades has led, among other social factors, to a serious lack of civic responsibility both of political actors and of the population and, finally, it is proposed that it is precisely in the strengthening of education where the main long-term opportunity to overcome these problems lies, in whose solution psychology is immersed. To carry out the above, each of the issues and their associated problems are exposed.

Keywords: *Pandemic; Psychology; Education; Axiology*

Pandemic

At present, Mexico is one of the countries that has been most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is among the world's first places for infections and deaths from this cause and continues to get worse. Although this is not a unique condition in this country, it is more serious, since other countries have suffered fewer deaths and infections to the extent that they have public health policies [1] that have allowed them to lessen the effect of the virus on its population, although with many protests and violations of government regulations.

It is also true that the governments of many countries and that of Mexico clearly, were overwhelmed by the global expansion of the virus, and that their populations have not always been fully collaborative, except in some places such as China, Nueva Zealand, Viet Nam or Japan (the latter has had 5,000 deaths, with the same population as Mexico and a much smaller territory), where the virus has been controlled.

In Mexico, the figure of 150 thousand deaths in the hospital has been reached in the second half of January 2021, according to the Ministry of Health (SSa), of which the government itself admits that it is not exact (although for the Institute National Statistics and Geography, an autonomous body of the Mexican government, there are 45% more deaths from COVID than the official figure admits). This amount had been calculated for the month of March, and the pandemic is still out of control.

Mexico ranks second in the world with the highest number of deaths per 100 infected people (8.5%, according to Johns Hopkins University), only surpassed by Yemen with 29 per 100 infections. Regarding the number of infected, the country ranks number 13 in the world, while in relation to the application of detection tests it is applied to 0.04% of the population. Far below WHO recommended.

Mexico also has the first place in the world in mortality of health professionals who have treated COVID-19 cases (in terms of the need to address stress among health personnel, see Sánchez Sosa [2]), as well as saturation hospital throughout the country and a National Vaccination Plan that is not entirely clear.

Given the arrival of the pandemic in the country, the attitude and reaction of the Mexican government was absolutely late and ineffective. Before his appearance, the Mexican president said “This pandemic fell like a glove”. A few months later he affirmed: “The pandemic is tamed”. The SSA had by then calculated a number of deaths between 6 and 8 thousand.

The recommendation to the population about the use of masks and confinement in their homes was not heeded by the chief executive himself. A large part of the population followed the example of their charismatic leader [3], not wearing a mask or confining themselves to their homes. The executive ignored the scientists’ recommendations, disqualifying the WHO, as his religious beliefs kept him safe. In addition, a high official of his government justified him for not wearing a mask because it constitutes a moral force and not contagion. Finally, the president, an elderly person with heart problems, fell ill with COVID-19.

Although drastic measures were taken to prevent the spread of the virus, such as closing schools, churches, shopping malls, etc., these were late and were lifted shortly after due to the damage to the economy. The various end of the year festivities brought the population back to the streets, with the consequences that have been previously narrated. Finally, the authorities did not take measures to keep people in their homes (as was done in various parts of the world), since the people “are good and wise” and even the application of the vaccine will be voluntary.

Psychology

According to the Data Board of the National Council of Science and Technology, of Mexico, released on January 22, 2021 through the media, between November 14, 2020 and January 21, 2021, gave a number of infections slightly higher than 700 thousand. This number represents 41% of the total pandemic in our country. In this period of time, the young population, between 20 and 39 years old, also showed an increase in the number of infections, in an amount close to 300 thousand, almost half of the cases in this period.

One of the reasons for the increase in the transmission of the virus resides in the fact that almost 60% of the economy of Mexico is informal; that is, people trade food or other products in street markets. Consequently, they have to go out on the streets and use massive and saturated transports that promote contagion.

However, it is also a fact that, as in other countries, the young population (and in general) has had enough of the confinement, which in Mexico is frequently synonymous with overcrowding and contagion, and the same as those who share conspiracy theories and deny the existence of the virus, took to the streets to protest, with the aforementioned results (although it should also be mentioned that the isolation from the general population was only an official recommendation).

The social protests that we have seen, are made up mostly of young people to publicly repudiate confinement, the use of a mask and healthy distance. Its purpose is to reject these measures. On the other hand, mass protests are a form of social catharsis of dissatisfied groups who feel that the measures taken by the authorities in the face of this problem, the pandemic, threaten their human and civil rights, in addition to expressing frustration at the deception of unfulfilled political promises. That is why they are shown and exhibited in crowded places, sometimes consuming substances, without wearing a mask and without keeping the suggested distance.

In Mexico people have returned to the streets. The protests were successful as the authorities have eliminated, modified or suspended the measures or declared their voluntary adoption. The populist government gives in because it knows that the protests can produce a negative image of its figure and/or its party and tries to prevent the above by declaring in advance the non-mandatory nature of the rec-

ommended measures. Without neglecting that there are always other opponents, linked to protests, who seek to take advantage of social mobilizations [4].

Education

It is a hypothesis of this work that the expansion of the pandemic and the low civility shown by the government and the population, is not only due to the attitude and measures taken by the authorities, but also to the low educational and civic level of a population poorly served by decades in that regard.

In addition to the lack of resources for quality education, there is the fact that its contents prioritize a technocratic training, following the guidelines of international organizations, leaving aside, or paying little attention to, the axiological component in education. Just look at some data.

Regarding the evaluation of the quality of the education provided in Mexico, the OECD applied the PISA test in 2015, which allows analyzing the knowledge and skills that students acquire and that are necessary to participate in society in a productive way. The results showed that the performance of Mexican students (423 points) is lower than the average of the OECD countries (494) points.

The evaluations carried out by UNICEF [5], within the National Plan for the Evaluation of Learning, of the Secretariat of Public Education, show the following results. 7 out of 10 3rd graders. high school students have difficulties in language and communication, for the interpretation and analysis of arguments in written texts. 9 out of 10 students scored below satisfactory in math. According to the same source, the most remote and marginalized schools showed the lowest level of content mastery. The national average for students with insufficient command of language and communication was 3 in 10 adolescents and in mathematics 6 out of 10 had insufficient achievement.

The solutions proposed by the authorities consist of strengthening the training of teachers, with strong pedagogical support, especially in those in marginalized and remote schools.

The Mexican educational system is of low quality. Both the public and private sectors. In the Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum and quality of education (2017 - 2018), Mexico ranks 102 out of 137 countries [6].

Lines above it is mentioned that one of the solutions is to train teachers with strong pedagogical support, but before addressing the point it is necessary to make another comment. It is also mentioned that the technocratic nature of education has been prioritized at the expense of the axiological component, or, we add, an axiology according to that type of education.

From the establishment of the neoliberal economic and political system in Mexico, in the second half of the 20th century, education was gradually transformed, ceasing to be nationalist, which extolled national identity and independence and to “the heroes who gave us Homeland”. The traditional and, until then, official vision of characters in the history of Mexico who until then had been heroes was officially questioned. And others resurfaced that had been forgotten for their historical role. Globalization was leaving behind nationalism as a value. Free textbooks, issued by the government to all elementary students in all grades, showed these changes. Teaching strategies were also modified, not always due to an adequate teaching application.

Gradually, curricular contents that were useless for the new and necessary education were eliminated. Topics such as Pre-Hispanic History, Ethics, Philosophy, Civic Education, etc., were erased from the curricula of basic and upper secondary education throughout said period, regardless of the party in power. That is, there was an axiological restructuring of education according to the new times, which demanded that teaching be adjusted to the needs of the market and companies, for which a new type of citizen was needed [7]. It is fair to say that broad sectors of Mexican society have shown strong opposition to these changes.

The neoliberal model has led Mexico to growing poverty and unemployment (and therefore, school dropouts), which has exacerbated the low educational level of the country and has favored the growth of the ranks of organized crime. Where you do not have to study in order to survive unemployment, at the cost of the lives of others or other crimes that we now see as everyday and a statistical issue, as is the case with the COVID-19 figures.

The previous approaches lead to emphasize the need to propose solutions not only on the pedagogical level, but also to explicitly strengthen the axiological training of teachers, as well as the way to teach them. It is true that a teacher cannot know everything, but it is also true that what he teaches must know. However, it is true that the preparation of teachers is not entirely adequate in terms of the curricular content to be taught, nor of the didactic strategies to be used. Continuous training is only a requirement to fulfill in order to move up the teaching ladder.

Education in Mexico has always been controlled by large unions, with broad coincidences with the governments in power and little attention to the responsibilities of their members, hence the unfortunate current state of education at all levels.

The civic responsibility of citizens begins in childhood, in the family and later in school with the interrelation between the teacher and the student, and in this interaction, says Feroso P [8], the teacher is an adult. The axiological scale of the teacher is already mature, it already has a scale of values, while that of the student, still in development, is ductile and changing. Values are stated in the official curricula, are reformulated in educational projects and in the ideals of each school institution and are specified during the teaching-learning process in the classroom [9].

It must be considered that the 'where' and how 'of education depends on the teacher. His ideology, personality, preparation, age, sex, etc. they influence the learning of one or the other values [10]. The educator is essential for the generation of learning values. Of this he should be aware. His competence, age, closeness, attitudes, etc. are, whether the teacher knows it or not, a model to be imitated (or rejected, the same as the content he teaches). They are messages transmitted to the student that can configure her education.

The educational and civic deterioration of the population is evident when, in addition to other highly unfavorable social conditions, the formation of values is neglected. As has been the case of education in Mexico, where a huge social decomposition takes place, which due to the political conditions mentioned above, has led to the promotion of quick money, to solve problems or to satisfy other types of needs, dissimulation, corruption (the great cancer of the country), and others, with the consequent school dropout; since education does not solve problems immediately and does not guarantee employment or a decent salary in the future [11,12].

Conclusion

The previous comments do not try to prioritize education as directly responsible for the lack of civic responsibility of the population in the uncontrollable contagion of the pandemic that we suffer (Mexico is already the third place in deaths from COVID-19 in the world, only behind the US and Brazil, without taking into account the size of the population of each of the three countries).

There are past and present historical factors that are related to this and other important social problems. The huge informal economy, unemployment, low wages, such high and lucrative crime, make education not the culprit, but also one of the victims, as the changes mentioned in it and the existing neglect of the national educational system (public schools do not have water, the groups are very numerous, the teachers have few adequate conditions to attend them and, often, insufficient knowledge).

However quality education is an instrument that helps to face the problem of training and civil liability, supported by the preparation of content, strategies and teachers, with an explicit axiological preparation, that does not consider these topics such as "filling", since they are the basis for active social participation, aware of social imbalances and their transformation and that, gradually, allow us to leave be-

hind the unfortunate situation we are going through today in Mexico. Psychology also shares a large part of this responsibility.

Bibliography

1. Carrascoza C. "Public Health Policies and Drug Use in Mexico". *EC Psychology and Psychiatry* 9.6 (2020): 63-67.
2. Sánchez Sosa. In C. Carrascoza; L. Echeverría Cognitive-behavioral therapies in Mexico. Mexico: UNAM/FISAC A.C (2020).
3. Webber, M.(1922) *Economy and Society*. Mexico: FCE (1999; trans. to spanish).
4. Fuentes J. "Social Psychology: What are the protests for?" Published (2008).
5. Unicef. "Educational quality" (2017).
6. Moy Valería. "Pears and Apples". *El Financiero* (2021).
7. Robles M. "Education and society in the history of Mexico". FCE: Mexico (1992).
8. Feroso P. "Theory of Education". An anthropological interpretation; Barcelona: Editions ceac.
9. Parra J. "Education in values and its practice in the classroom". *Pedagogical Trends* 8 (2003): 69-87.
10. Barba B. "Education and Values: A search to rebuild coexistence". *Mexican Journal of Educational Research* 10 (2005): 9-14.
11. Front for freedom of expression and social protest in Mexico Human rights and social protest in Mexico (2014).
12. Rodriguez G. "From participation to political protest". *Convergence* 14.5 (2007).

Volume 8 Issue 3 March 2021

© All rights reserved by César Augusto Carrascoza Venegas.