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Re-Mapping Global Education

Title: After-school program in Northeast Mexico: Targeting immigrant and indigenous children's needs and potentialities

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Social and political fluctuations have been part of the world's contemporary agenda. Due to this situation, migration processes have increased in recent years. In the case of Mexico, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), 89% of migration is related to people travelling from Mexico to the United States. Mexican people are involved in these displacements for different reasons: The most representative are the search of an occupation (67.8%) and to join with their families (14.4%).

More recently, international and Mexican migrants have stopped addressing the United States as their main destination and have started choosing other cities in Mexico as their destination (Vernon, 2017). This is because of the tougher regulations established by the U.S. government, the legal consequences to enter the U. S. illegally (Jacobs, 2017), and the attractive and more stable economic and legal conditions in Mexico (Vernon, 2017).

In this context of changing social conditions, inequity and social trade-offs, education could be considered a transformative instrument to support children's needs and potentialities, giving them and their families skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge to adapt to their new living conditions. Additionally, UNICEF (2016) establishes that governments and societies need to work with children's equity, which refers to "...all children having the same opportunities to survive, develop and attain their full potential. Fundamentally, it is about fairness and opportunity – a fair chance for every child" (UNICEF, 2016, p. 7).

With this objective in mind, and within a qualitative and participatory methods view, we have addressed the needs and potentialities of immigrant and indigenous children from south and center of Mexico through an after-school program in an elementary school in Nuevo Leon, Mexico (Northeast region). In their search for better living conditions, these children and their families have moved from their place of origin (south and center of Mexico) to Nuevo Leon, Mexico, and they now live in a low-income community, with some characteristics of marginalization and vulnerability, such as violence, drugs, and economic risks.

Our role as researchers and practitioners is related to the relationship with children in an after-school program. Taking as reference the cases of The Fifth Dimension (Cole, 2006) or B-Club (Faulstich-Orellana, 2016), as two role models of after-school systems in the United States, we have adapted learning activities in an after-school program at Francisco I. Madero School (pseudonym).

First, we got in touch with the school's principal to know the main needs of the students, in order to create a plan to help them achieve competencies in areas such as Language (Spanish and Indigenous Language), Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social & Emotional Learning, and the Arts, with the inclusion of gamification and alternative pedagogies as strategies to engage students in their own transformation. Then, we articulated a schedule to offer special activities in a weekly after-school program. We used field notes to gather data and important information through participant observation, focus groups, and interviews with key participants. Furthermore, we compared this information with official documents of the Secretariat of Public Education in Mexico, in order to see the differences between the official discourse and the daily experiences of children and communities. Finally, we had weekly group meetings to share our findings and prepare significant activities for the kids.

This project is actually running, but some of the preliminary findings are the following: (1) Social and cultural capital of children and their families that can be included in school curricula, in order to enhance and improve children's commitment with school, (2) Children's bilingual skills, as they speak Spanish and an Indigenous language as native speakers, and in some cases also English (teachers and policy makers must include these experiences to transform schools' experiences), and (3) Importance of gamification and alternative pedagogies to connect school with children's social lives (in this case, with migration and displacement experiences, as a healing option for them).

The application of this participatory and action research showed us a different perspective of Nuevo Leon and its social needs. These children's situations evidence the necessity of public spaces of non-formal education systems to enhance dialogue, social transformation, and promote kids' potentialities. Also, a reflective pedagogy which considers the connection with communities and their knowledge (indigenous and migrant experiences) is a key aspect in this process, because the main social change will come from these participants.

Keywords:

- Immigrant and Migrant Education
- Indigenous knowledge and education
- Multicultural education