Resilient School Practice: Actions to Address Contextual Situations of Vulnerability

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Abstract
Resilience has been defined as the human capacity to overcome adversity and build on it, adapt, recover and access a meaningful and productive life. Schools as social communities, also generate the capacity to adapt to adverse events and contexts, through resilient actions. Thus, the goal of this research was to identify the actions that schools conducted to respond and overcome vulnerable contextual situations, which may affect their academic processes. 16 high added value secondary schools were selected. To make this selection, multilevel techniques were used. Schools whose academic results of census assessments were higher compared to other schools in similar contextual conditions, were involved in this study. Open interviews were applied to school supervisors and management teams of these schools. Participants answered questions about actions that their school communities do to cope disadvantaged contextual situations and get outstanding academic results. Answers of supervisors and management teams were compared and analyzed. Fourteen categories of different types of practice emerged through this analysis. These actions were related to school organization; strategies of discipline; promotion of school life; leadership of the principal; involvement of parents; assessments of teachers and students; innovative teaching activities; time management; inclusion practices; attention to poor performance; teacher training; among others. It was concluded that the high added value schools shared, resilient actions to address similar contextual situations of vulnerability. But also, there are certain actions that are specifically built to adapt to adverse events and contexts. All those actions are discussed in this study.

Keywords: School resilience, secondary schools, vulnerability, school context.

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Introduction

Schools can offer opportunities to students that help to enable them to perform satisfactorily, even against what would be expected for pupils under the same conditions (Wrigley, 2013). It is possible to identify schools in vulnerable contexts that obtain satisfactory academic results. Even schools that have achieved outstanding results despite having various risk factors or be located in vulnerable contexts (Bellei, Muñoz Perez & Raczynski, 2003). Thus, social conditions surrounding the school may determine policies and actions within the institution, just as the expectations of parents regarding the education of their children can shape school practice as well as the type of financing the school receives, finding that the environment around public schools (as opposed to private schools) provides less support for the school to reach their educational goals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Martin & Mauri (1989) stated that a school should be considered as a system that is in relation to other systems, and develops an institutional activity, same which is mediated by society and culture. As a result, the organization and planning are important elements because they allow to regulate, in a favorable way, all the activities at the school.

Murillo (2004) stated that the internal determinants of success, those belonging to the school, do not act independently of external determinants, those based on the context. In this sense, the author claimed that teaching activities and policies are conditioned at socio-economic and environmental level of discourse in which the schools are located.

Regarding Latin America, the results of research on school effectiveness list a number of elements that are present in schools, and their effectiveness relays in the presence of certain characteristics attributed, include elements such as resources, educational leadership and school climate (OREALC/UNESCO, 2008). On the opposite sense, the absences of these factors result in inefficiency (Hernández, Murillo & Martínez, 2013). Murillo (2003) stated that for secondary schools in México the context has high significance with respect to the effect that the school has on educational achievement that students obtained.

Some of the situations associated with educational failure, such as desertion and low quality of education, are related to socio-economic poverty in which students live, this feature represents a very important factor of social vulnerability (Villalta, 2010). Often, in investigations about school failure it is include cases of students who live under poverty, this sector of the society it is already vulnerable itself, not only because the economic conditions to which students and their families live, this population is affected directly and indirectly on the academic performance due to their living conditions. Most of the investigations of schools in vulnerable contexts had been aimed at justifying the reason for the low academic performance of their students or simply to list the risk factors (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1997). While the power that the context is in the school community is recognized in such studies rarely these schools are studied combining contextual variables and school success, because belonging to a vulnerable context is a predisposing factor for the failure.

The study on the academic success of students in adverse conditions can be addressed, from the perspective of School Resilience. This approach recognizes the existence of the

vulnerability in educational settings, risk and protective factors in the school community, as well, the actions used to deal with difficulties that are presented in the schools (Villalba, 2003). The most important contribution of studies on resilience has been the ability to provide resources and skills to individuals, families, schools and society in general, giving them the power of overcome or circumvent the adverse situations (Aguiar & Acle, 2012).

The actions carried out within an educational institution impact the lives of students by encouraging and facilitating higher results, more than academic achievement, the school can not only benefit the student in their school development, but in other areas of their life. Therefore, the school may provide certain factors that protect and support the student as an individual, even outside the academic community; factors such as high performance expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation (Acevedo & Mondragón, 2005), representing a contribution to their life. On the other hand, the school may have negative elements that hinder obtaining satisfactory academic achievement in students.

The analysis of educational actions and environments where they are used and their proper application, can result in progress towards the understanding of the influence of the factors involved in not only academic results of schools in vulnerable contexts. Murillo (2004) mentioned that there have been numerous investigations focused on identifying the determinants of academic achievement; however, there remains a need not only to know what works in the areas of learning and education, but to know why and how it works.

Mostly the study of schools in vulnerable contexts has been aimed at justifying the reason for the low academic performance of their students or simply to list the risk factors (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1997). While the power that the context is in the school community is recognized in such studies rarely these schools are studied combining contextual variables and school success, as belonging to a vulnerable context is almost always guarantee failure.

Escudero (2009) affirmed that identifying the knowledge and successful experiences that others have applied may encourage reflection on who uses, but it is necessary to take into account the context in which that experience, translated into practice, applies; since some actions may be beneficial in certain contexts and specific subject under similar conditions, while in other contexts not. Within this logic, educational institutions can promote resilient responses to emerging or permanent situations and thus cushion the negative effect they could cause to the school organization; providing the necessary conditions for this to happen, through preventive or remedial practice, taking into account the environment (Trujillo, López & Lorenzo, 2011). All this, based on evidence to support your application, it is intended to generate evidence in this investigation.

The perspective of resilience seeks to interpret the strengths in terms of contextual risks to which it responds, in consequence the study of successful schools in vulnerable contexts from this perspective, rescue most of the elements in the educational reality. Thus, the goal of this research was to identify the actions that schools conducted to respond and overcome vulnerable contextual situations, which may affect their academic processes.

Method
This study is part of an investigation (in the process to this date) called *Characterization of good actions in secondary schools with high added value in Baja California* (Caso, Chaparro & Lizasoain, 2012) which is a replica of the one held in Spain named *Characterization of good practice in schools with high added value*, by Lizasoain et al. (2012). The main objective of those researches is to identify school actions that take place in educational institutions that have academic results above expectations, or in other words, schools with high added value.

The data to perform the analysis in the Baja California study were, firstly, the results of *Enlace* 2010 and 2011, and secondly the information obtained in the context questionnaires that were applied to a large sample of students at the Evaluative Strategy Integral 2010 and 2011, conducted by the Educational Assessment Unit (Contreras et al., 2011, 2012).

In the Baja California study from Caso et al., (2012) and using multilevel techniques, 16 secondary schools that got results beyond what, according to its context variables (high value, or high residue) would be expected were identified. It also identified 16 schools whose academic results fell below what would be expected, according to its context (low residue). In this way a sample of 32 schools was selected. A qualitative treatment was applied to the data, a type of study in which interviews were conducted with management teams, through a predefined category system (see Instruments subsection) was performed.

The information derived from these interviews is the input for the study presented, in which an in-depth analysis was made of these interviews to identify the actions that schools conduct to address the vulnerability environments.

Participants
Management teams of 32 secondary schools in the state of Baja California, Mexico; of which 16 were located as high value-added schools (seven general schools, 44%; eight private, 50%, a technique, 6%) and 16 low residue (six comprehensive schools, 37%; seven technical, 44% ; three private, 18%) were participants in this study. The management teams were composed mainly of principal, assistant principal, counselor prefect. A participatory approach to the interviewees was that they had seniority in the school of at least six months, if that did not meet this criterion the presence of another member who regularly worked on campus was requested and it did comply with the requirement.

Instruments
The interviews were based on a list of categories derived from a comprehensive review of literature on school effectiveness, same that were used by Lizasoain et al. (2012). The categories addressed during the interviews were: a) general perception of the school, b) environment and history, c) management and organization, d) management team, e) resources, f) programs, plans and projects, g) training and commitment School staff, h) assessment, i) assessment of student learning, j) teaching methods and teaching materials, k) attention to diversity, l) coexistence and school climate, m) two-way relationship between the school, family, community and support networks and n) other. These topics

discussed openly, so that they could identify contextual and school actions that were carried into school issues.

An observation checklist was also used as a complement to the script interview that was applied to the management teams. The visits to campus for interviews, also allowed for direct observation to identify aspects such as the dynamics and organization of personnel, infrastructure, physical aspect of the school environment and coexistence.

Procedure
The interviews were conducted in schools buildings. Management teams was requested that the interview be conducted in an office or classroom alone. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for later analysis. Two persons of the research team (interviewer and observer) attended each of the interviews.

Data analysis
Four previously trained analysts participated in the process of analyzing the interviews. Based on the fourteen integrated in interviews categories, contextual vulnerabilities were identified, the schools were defined as all those problems that the school faced in their daily work and that could come from both the internal context and the external. Analysts also identified actions that schools conducted to address these vulnerabilities.

Subsequently classification and grouping of the identified contextual situations, concentrating on three major groups was made: vulnerabilities of the school context; of the students; and the social and family context. Also, the actions carried out by schools to deal with these contextual situations were identified. Both contextual situations such as school actions were organized hierarchically highest to lowest incidence and occur together, both actions are performed and the contexts in which they apply.

Results
The results are reported in hierarchical order, sorted from highest to lowest incidence. At first the vulnerabilities related to the school context are presented. It is noted that the biggest problem facing schools in this area is the lack of staff. It is also seen that the actions are different schools, high and low residue, implemented to address this situation. For example, schools are characterized by high residue take action where the school community is involved, whereas in most low residue schools have a specific practice.

Another problem the school context is the lack of equipment and materials. In this case high schools residue actions are characterized by the involvement of teachers, while schools in low residue, most do not have a specific practice or ask students to bring their materials. Likewise, schools also face the problem of uncommitted teachers. This striking that fewer actions are exercised in schools residue high compared to low. However, as can be seen in schools in low residue actions they are focused more on coercion, this can be seen in table 1.

Table 1
Situations of vulnerability in school context and educational actions taken by the school

Situation	High residue	Low residue
Lack of staff or teachers absents	1. Teachers work more than 100% 2. Staff do other duties (i.e. a teacher is also psychologist) 3. Parents make financial support 4. Planning helps to cover charge absents of teachers 5. The principal does other duties 6. Support social service students	1. Do not have a specific action. 2. The existing staff distributes tasks 3. It calls on the authorities to replenish the staff, though no response
Lack of equipment and materials in laboratories	1. Teachers bring their mobile laboratory 2. Teachers improvise with what you have available	1. They do not have a specific strategy 2. Students bring their tool 3. It gradually repair equipment 4. Activities are carried out to raise funds to purchase equipment 5. Teachers bring their equipment
Apathetic teachers and / or unwilling	1. The management team seeks to establish agreements with them 2. The school seeks support from social service UABC 3. No relocation or new activities	1. They are given by trade agreements or commitments. 2. Teachers are asked about their needs 3. The principal talks to them to sensitize 4. There they were missing and already 5. The school justifies 6. They provide Internet pages as suggested 7. Attention calls on the teaching meetings 8. They are given to support materials
Incomplete installations (laboratories, workshops, libraries, etc.)	1. Adjustments are made to available spaces	1. They do not have a specific strategy 2. Support to the authorities and parents are requested, however no response is obtained 3. Adjustments are made to spaces
Inexperienced teachers	1. Accompaniment and strategies 2. Supervision of plannings 3. Supervision of classroom activities	1. They do not have a specific strategy

Lower incidence, but also referred by schools are the problems related to poor reading comprehension and students who do not speak the language. In this regard it is noted that the number of actions taken by schools of higher residue than those made by low residue, for example, who do not count, even with specific action to support students who do not speak Spanish.

The second area discussed is related to the students, presented in table 2. It is showed that the main problem is, without doubt, the low student performance. It also notes that various

actions are exerted by schools to address this situation. However, you may notice that both schools of high and low residue predominant action is the educational support outside of class time.

Table 2
Situations of vulnerability in students and actions taken by the schools

Situation	High residue	Low residue
Low achievement	1. Educational support outside school hours 2. Each case is analyzed in a particular manner 3. In necessary cases it is channeled to support institutions 4. Evaluations are used to address the areas to difficult 5. Parents are notified to seek help. 6. Specific suggestions are provided to parents 7. Savannah strategy (registration and individual follow up) 8. Hours adviser within the day 9. Recovery program 10. Strengthening program supported by the university	1. Educational support outside school hours 2. Make appointments for parents 3. To prevent problems these students are distributing between groups 4. Plans tutorials students helping other students, supervised by the teachers 5. Refer them to USAER 6. Work with the minimal normality 7. Academy meetings each month 8. Surveillance students. 9. The principal supervises the strategies that teachers do in classroom. 10. Tracking ballots used 11. Differential assessment 12. Follow up 13. Participation in PEMLE network (individualized attention) 14. Inform parents of the tasks that the student must perform a week. 15. Tracking ballot. 16. Notebook tracking support for parents.
Students with special educational needs	1. Teachers planning different activities for those students 2. Differential assessment 3. Group meetings to seek support strategies. 4. They are detected at the beginning of the school year, and the management team and teachers follow up 5. They are located in accessible rooms 6. Students ramps to lidos with Wheelchair accessible 7. It allows students to progress at their own pace 8. The counselor provides specific exercises to those students	1. The management team suggests strategies for teachers 2. Make appointments for parents 3. Without Direction support teachers became tutors 4. Teachers have external training 5. Teachers work intuitively 6. Refer to external support 7. Differentiated assessment 8. USAER support within classroom 9. Adaptation of classes 10. Teachers discuss each case to exchange strategies 11. They do not have a specific strategy

Children with behavioral problems and hyperactivity	1. The staff (principal, psychologist or counselor and teacher) analyze each situation	1. They do not have a specific strategy 2. Chat with students 3. As prevention action, these students are distributed between groups 4. The situation is analyzed take agreements 5. It seeks support with external institutions 6. Tracking Cards 7. The counselor informs teachers for lookout the students. 8. The counselor informs teachers how to handle these students 9. Students are sending to therapy
Truancy and Dropout	1. School and every teacher take control assistance	1. Make appointments for parents 2. The principal asks sensitivity teachers 3. They do not have a specific strategy 4. Control systems, roll call 5. A control sheet signatures of teachers is used to inform student attendance to parents 6. Continuous assessment
Low reading comprehension	1. Circle readings 2. Family reading 3. Classroom reading 4. Reading index 5. Parents are informed	1. Reading classroom daily
Students who do not speak Spanish	1. Ask a peer to be his/her tutor 2. Arrange students in teams to support each other.	1. They do not have a specific strategy

Low residue schools that more action is implemented is to give citations to parents. However, in this area there are differences in the actions they take both types of schools, because while not exactly the same actions, all have the characteristic of supporting the student.

To a lesser extent, the second problem facing schools in the area of student are the special educational needs. In this case as in the previous situation, support operations in both high- and low residue was observed, exceeding the amount undertaken by past them. So it is also noted that other vulnerable schools are facing the problems of student behavior. Here it is noteworthy that in schools of high residue found only one action to address it, while many were those performed by schools low residue. Very similar to what happens with the problem of absenteeism and dropout rates, in which high residue schools the only action performed is control of assistance.

Finally, the third area in which schools face situations of vulnerability is related to the family context. In this case, the main problem referred is negligence and lack of parental interest, to which, it is noteworthy that in general there are few actions taken by the schools, but in the case of low residue, most do not even have a specific strategy, the above is reported in table 3.

Table 3
Situations of Vulnerability of the family and social context and actions taken by the schools

Situation	High residue	Low residue
Negligence and lack of parental implication	1. Teachers support including economically help 2. Home visits 3. A calendar is used to informed of activities undertaken	1. They do not have a specific strategy 2. Make appointments for parents 3. Teachers sponsor students 4. The cooperative school gives students food 5. Home visits
The school is in a very conflictive area	1. Strengthen the fence 2. Support programs for the care or violence 3. Teachers make guards and patrols inside and outside school	1. Rounds are made to monitor school 2. Protecting mesh and placed in the windows 3. Operative revision or backpacks 4. Shock Therapy (visits to youth centers integration) 5. Support mothers watching around the school. 6. The patrol is called
Gangs and theft at school	1. Set surveillance camera 2. Students are taken with the principal 3. Parents are called	1. Chat with students 2. Make appointments for parents 3. Parents are seeking for help 4. Teachers ask students to repair de damage
Drug Addiction	1. Agreements with parents 2. Searching support of external institutions 3. Students are taken with the principal 4. Parents are called 5. Research project with students to raise awareness	1. Students are taken with the principal 2. Make appointments for parents 3. They do not have a specific strategy 4. Students are separate from school (ask them to come just once a week)

In this same area another problem that arises is that schools are geographically located in conflict zones. In this case, it appears that both types of schools doing similar actions to address this problem. Although to a lesser extent, other problems faced by schools are gangs and drug abuse to which the actions are very similar between the two schools.

Conclusions

The problems facing schools are different, but similar. Schools with high and low residue perform different actions in different situations of vulnerability, but in some cases have common ground.

In secondary schools with high added value management teams take various types of leadership and pedagogical function or the bureaucracy is not limited but articulates different dynamics in the exercise of its function, depending on the needs that the school has. It values, recognizes and promotes the participation of all stakeholders; management, personal computer (administrative, teaching and support staff), students and parents. Continuous training in various subjects, both academic and health care and other offers.

The director and his team recognized the importance of an appropriate working environment. They take into account the views of staff and their personal needs, however the manager is the main figure in the decision making. Each of the members takes responsibility in different areas, not limited to a specific activity.

The management teams showed a constant concern about their students reach satisfactory academic achievement, which translates into specific actions, such as: attention to students with special educational needs, monitoring of special cases or teaching involvement from the management team.

With regard to administrative, the director and his team are involved in all activities resulting therefrom. Depending on the hierarchy, the manager delegates responsibilities to his team, and also in the educational field. This without diminishing autonomy to each of the members of the management team and teachers.

The lack of equipment and personnel are the main problems that schools face in schools. To which high residue schools perform proactive actions aimed at lessening the effects of this, managing resources and seeking support outside the education system institutions. Parents are actively involved in obtaining resources, whether organizing fundraisers or supporting financially to address some of the needs of the school.

In the area of student the main problem facing schools is poor school performance, to which schools high residue present actions very focused on promoting student achievement, paradoxically the number of shares held are in low residue schools.

Finally in the family and society, the main problem facing schools is negligence and lack of parental interest. To which, high residue schools focuses more on search strategies approach with parents, adjust schedules personalized attention, communication is via Internet or implement sanctions.

As general conclusion, the findings are according from Wrigley (2013) who stated that schools can offer opportunities to students that help to enable them to perform satisfactorily, even against what would be expected for pupils under the same conditions. However, the results of this study showed that high and low residue took similar actions to equal vulnerable contexts (Bellei et al., 2003).

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