

reform to the Article 18 of the Constitution to establish the implementation of alternative methods in the criminal field, with the purpose of offering a reparatory justice option at a constitutional level. With a greater support, in 2008, the implementation of alternative methods of conflict solution was extended to other fields with the reform to the Article 17 of the Constitution. With this legal framework "mediation" gets a formal character in the Mexican context and it started to be regulated in several states of the country, although today, only 23 states have materialized these proposals.

3. Multidisciplinary character: Because it can be applied in different fields like law, medicine, psychology, education.
4. The term "mediation" has different meanings that can be confusing and sometimes it is defined as a synonym of conciliation, education in values, therapy, counselling, and coaching.

In general, with the previous referents, it can be seen why mediation is a polysemic concept, as it has different edges for its explanation and/or understanding.

From a general perspective, mediation can be defined from the Vallejo & Guillén's side (5) as a confidential, voluntary and structured process of conflict solution useful for both parts that are involved in the conflict to satisfactorily solve their conflict, accepting the help of a professional who is an expert and duly trained in mediation, whose main characteristics are to be impartial and that he/she does not impose agreements but guides both parts to accomplish a same objective, in a balanced and fair way.

The previous definition allows identifying that mediation can be defined according to different elements that have been gathered with the purpose of having a better understanding of it. For an accurate definition (5), five essential elements of mediation are taken into account:

1. The mediator has no power of making decisions.
2. The mediator helps, advices, and facilitates a voluntary conflict solution that will benefit both parts.
3. The mediator has an impartial attitude.

4. The mediator intervenes by petition of the parties.
5. The mediator ends his/her intervention by getting the objective or when it is no longer convenient for the parties.

The elements previously mentioned allow revising in group the different theoretical conceptions, and finally, according to Table 1 that includes the concepts related to mediation, it is identified that mediation is configured by three elements: assuming mediation as a technique, retaking the role of the mediator, and depending on the objective.

Tabla 1. Concepts related to mediation according to Vinyamata (4).

DISCIPLINE	OBJECT OF STUDY	RESOURCES	MAIN ACTOR	CONFLICTS TACKLED
Mediation		The parties, with the mediator's help, look for elements that help improving communication with the objective of reaching a voluntary and satisfactory agreement for both parties.	Mediator	Of low and moderate intensity, specially family, educational or interpersonal problems.
Arbitration		Application of the norm or regulation in an impartial manner.	Arbitrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial • Mercantile
Conciliation	Conflict	Respect to the legal framework to reach an agreement.	Conciliator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor • Social
Education in values		Programs of formal and informal education in the educational field.	Teacher Pedagogue	Prevention of conflicts
Therapies		Processes of psychological relevance.	Psychologist	Treatment of personal crisis
Counselling		Treatment of crisis.	Specialist	Counselling in personal crisis
Coaching		Coaching people to plan and develop a satisfactory life style.	Coach	Help in crisis

Source: Vinyamata E. Aprender mediación. España: Paidós; 2003 (4).

Besides defining mediation, it is necessary to identify which are the characteristics that make it an alternative strategy. According to Boqué (6), there are four characteristics that are substantial for mediation and are part of its essence.

- **Voluntariness:** refers to the freedom of the parties to start or not a mediation process, as well as their freedom to abandon it once it has started.