University and School Collaborations during a Pandemic. Sustaining Educational Opportunity and Reinventing Education: A Book Review

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The sphere of education got the hardest hit ever due to the Pandemic Crisis 2020 which is still on, generating mindboggling challengers for the educators worldwide. Each particular school and higher education institution had to cope with the unexpected circumstances single-handedly and fast. The experience of the universities maintaining the studying process not only in house but also in elementary and secondary schools under their supervision is collected in the monograph called *University and School Collaborations during a Pandemic. Sustaining Educational Opportunity and Reinventing Education,* edited by Fernando M. Reimers and Francisco J. Marmolejo (2022).

The monograph is the book aimed at investigating and accumulating expertise of 20 universities from all over the world volunteering to share the results of their case studies of coping with the pandemic crisis in education, covering the sustainability of the educational process, curriculum programs realization, teaching skills development, digital tutorial programs creation, as well as collaboration with parents and authorities. Overall, the book is a comprehensive an applicable read with 22 chapters designed to come up with useful collectible advice on the activities resilience in the times of crisis.

The book can be useful not only for educators, teaching and schooling managers, but also such stakeholders as state officials, authorities and parents.

The authors employ a consciousness-raising approach as regards various ways of arranging online studies at all the levels of a comprehensive educational system – from elementary school to postdoctoral students' guidance.

Chapter 1 of the book headlined *Leading Learning During a Time of Crisis. Higher Education Responses to the Global Pandemic of 2020* written by Fernando M. Reimers and Francisco Marmolejo is a lead-in article providing an insight into the world universities' expertise of dealing with the multi-focal crisis, which struck all the spheres of life so unexpectedly and overwhelmingly. It is a study of the universities' capacity in transitioning to
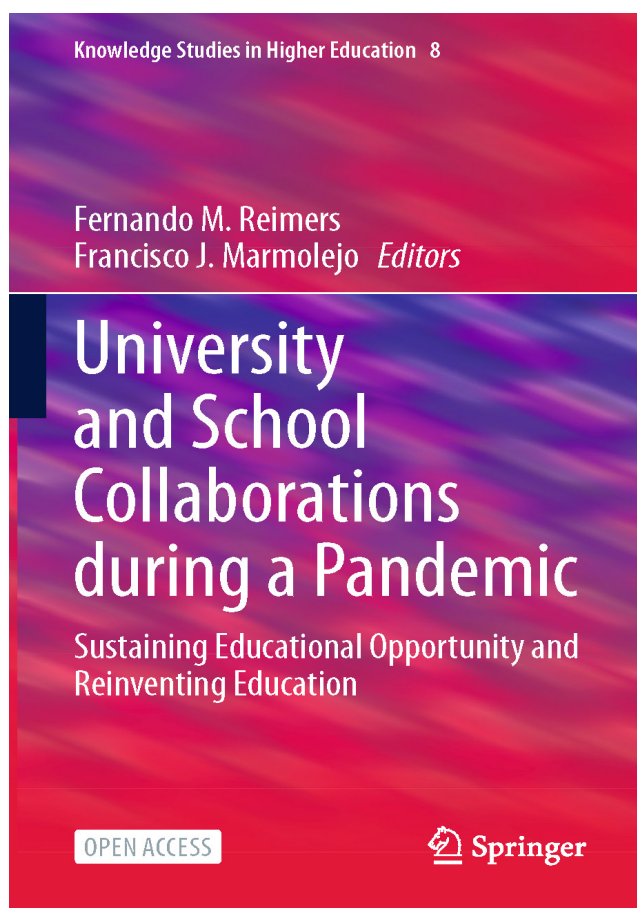
online teaching-learning format as well as the readiness of the universities to render support to elementary and secondary schools.

This chapter is entirely devoted to the analysis of accumulative expertise of 20 universities worldwide – including countries with different economic background – from developing to developed ones as well as those with rapidly growing economies. It briefly considers the capacity of universities to collaborate with the communities in solving the urgent challenges of the pandemic time. According to the researchers' estimates, 1.712 million learners worldwide were impacted by the school and university closure. This way the educators had to deal with the most severe emergency ever, making students rely on online learning, radio, television, mobile applications and printed materials.

Firstly chaotic, with the time the process of online learning appeared to be well-managed in schools and fairly adapted to the new reality with the help of universities' instruction and guidance.

The researchers identified 20 universities around the world volunteering to collaborate with elementary and secondary schools. To this end, a special questionnaire was developed for the universities under consideration, monitoring their cooperative activities with schools under the charge.

This way, in-depth case studies were worked out by the universities of Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, India, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Portugal, Qatar, Russia, Spain, Turkey, the USA and Vietnam.

64% of the respondents turned to direct support of their universities to elementary and secondary education institutions in order to instruct, render help and expertise, come up with learning resources to provide continuity of studying. They have developed partnerships with schools and teaching staff this way.

This chapter is an especially valuable one for it provides a questionnaire the universities participating had to fill in and respond with. On the basis of this questionnaire the necessary data were accumulated, analyzed and processed to measure the engagement of universities into the assistance of schools.

Chapter 2 called *Fundação Getulio Vargas' Efforts to Improve Basic Education Before, During, and After the Pandemic* written by a group of Brazilian authors Claudia Costin, João Lins, José Henrique Paim, Marieta de Moraes Ferreira, Raquel de Oliveira, Teresa Pontual, and Vinicius Farias Santose is a case study of the activities of the only Brazilian university taking part in the accumulative research. Already at the very initial stage of the pandemic FGV High School established the necessary partnerships and provided digital materials and programs to educational institutions across Brazil, benefiting 3.5 million students. To spread online content and teaching materials free of charge they created 2 monitoring centers, arranging teaching programs for educators, seminars and webinars for policymakers throughout the pandemic. As well as FDG leveraged its resources directed at educating professionals and secondary school students.

What is particularly remarkable in this aspect is that the pandemic boosted collaboration of different departments of the university in working out solutions and programs for basic education continuity, which is of major importance since Brazil is the biggest country of Latin America.

Chapter 3 under the heading *Pontifcia Universidad Católica Support for the School System During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Chile* authored by Ernesto Treviño, Magdalena Claro, and Lorena Medina considers the expertise of the neighboring Chile and one of its leading universities in supporting the local school system. As we may judge here has appeared an array of obstacles – firstly, school system if highly atomized in this country, secondly, two-thirds of schools are private-subsidized. It ultimately complicated the ability to reach all of them as well as deliver assistance. Nevertheless, with this purpose separate faculties started providing consultancy on educational issues, as well as there were multi-focal partnerships arranged of several universities in order to settle the oncoming challenges.

Chapter 4 headlined *Desafío TEP– Positive Educational Trajectories. A Public-Private Alliance to Strengthen Public Education During the Pandemic,* written by Juan PabloValenzuela and Simon Rodriguez describes the experience of another Chilean university, the biggest and the oldest in the country, of mitigating the problem of school exclusion during the pandemic. What's more, this university mostly concentrated its efforts on public schooling,

including elementary and secondary, on par with support rendering to government in working out the necessary programs and consulting.

Chapter 5 called *Reimagine Elementary and SecondaryLearning During the Pandemic: Tsinghua University* by *Deyu Woody Wang, Weihang Cheng, Yun Jin, and Manwen Ivy Guo* includes information about the Chinese Tsighua university. It is defining, discussing and rationalizing the benefits provided by the university to the elementary and secondary learning during the hard times. The challenges were enthusiastically treated by the faculty, since technologies inspire reforms in education. With this purpose they worked out a new tuition form with the introduction of new teaching and tutorial positions implying different obligations and sphere of responsibility – namely, learning buddies, lecturers, podcasters, mentors, organizing volunteers. This way no one was left behind.

Chapter 6 headlined *A Covid-19 Response with Years in the Making: The Contribution of EAFIT University to Basic and Secondary Education in Colombia During the Pandemic* authored by Claudia María Zea Restrepo, Diego E. Leal-Fonseca, María-Antonia Arango Salinas, and Laura Hernandez-Velez reports on one of the Columbian private universities involvement into providing consultancy to 96 certified Secretaries of Education, appointed by the governmental bodies across the country. On top of it, as a research institution working out computer-based courses for more than a decade, EAFIT university appeared to be helpful in granting educational resources to schools.

Chapter 7 called *Coping with Covid-19: Forging Creative Pathways to Supporteducational Continuity Amidst the Pandemic* and written by *Vidya Yeravdekar and Nidhi Piplani Kapur* describes the actions and changes triggered by the pandemic to be introduced not only in the university under consideration, but also in schools of different levels both in urban and rural areas.

The main problems, as described by the researchers, were teachers and administrators training and connectivity. Thus, the university under consideration invested heavily into the staff capacity building, ensuring at the same time strong partnerships with students and parents with special attention to their physical and mental health.

Chapter 8 entitled *Case Study on Distance Learning for K-12 Education in Japan: The NagasakiTakaoka Model* written by Masaki Umejima, Cherry H. Y. Wong, Jiro Kokuryo, Jun Murai,David Farber, Keiko Okawa, and Kan Suzuki provides the description of an outstanding case study of a Japanese university, establishing strong tights with the government and schools in the pandemic. The uniqueness of the case is in the policy of Japanese universities at large - they have been accruing expertise in online learning practices since the emergence of the Internet. The distance learning model the university worked out for schools was successfully applied in the pandemic. The main principle they worked out is flexibility, since tailored solution can't be good for all.

Three chapters of the monograph provide a kind of accumulative experience of three universities of Mexico, namely, *Chapter 9 Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de*

Puebla (BUAP). A Transversal Model to Support Educational Continuity authored by Fostering Resilience, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Rodolfo Zepeda and Roberto Quintero covers the practice of this university of turning to online studies, which was a brand new experience for them. On par with it, they had to turn to the commitment to grant at least one digital course to each of their students – from upper secondary level to senior students and even faculty members, providing relevant academic, technical and administrative conditions.

Chapter 10 entitled *Academic Continuity During the Covid-19 Global Health Emergency:Education 4.0 and the Flexible-Digital Model of Tecnologico de Monterrey University in Mexico Supporting Secondary Education* written by Arturo Molina, Beatriz Villegas, César Pavel Ochoa, and Jhonattan Miranda describes the creation and overwhelming usage of an innovative Flexible-Digital Model to help support education continuity process in secondary schools of Mexico with the support of the university under consideration - from secondary school to university level, including post graduates. Tecnologico de Monterrey University in Mexico had a substantial base of online studying programs created in the previous few years.

To highlight the ultimate role of technology in this process there were 2 case studies conducted. The university comprising different level institutions successfully showed its preparedness for the sudden changes, turning to

online resources. Luckily, this university appeared to be a rare exemption, as it had been specializing on designing and delivering digital education programs for 30 years running.

Chapter 11 of the monograph society – *University of Guadalajara: Transforming and Innovating Through Stronger Collaboration Between Higher and Upper-Secondary Education During the Pandemic* authored by Carlos Iván Moreno, Cesar Barba Delgadillo, Miguel Ángel Sigala and Ernesto Herrera Cárdenas speculates on the university's efforts on stronger collaboration and building tights with higher secondary education extending their assistance to schools. In sum, the initial panic of the coming challenges turned into the synergy of mutually advantageous cooperation and innovative educational model. Still there are a lot of grounded complaints that very few people get a higher education in Mexico these days.

This way we come to the conclusion that all the three universities in Mexico include upper-secondary system, but still there is a shortage of teamwork between universities and schools, This type of communication needs a new level, resilience and upgrading with the view of the job market and employment opportunities.

Chapter 12 headlined *University as State Agent or Social Actor: Al Akhawayn University and Social Responsibility* written by Mohammed Dahbi and Hassane Darhmaoui contains both a case study and a call for action. Their experience in Morocco is not much different from what was happening in the world, with just one minor detail. The university in question is established as a state institution but acts autonomously, which is a great benefit. This particular feature allows it to use the full potential of their sophisticated faculty and staff to contribute to the development of the society – which they consider to be the major responsibility of any educational institution. From the start of the pandemic the university serves as a helping hand for educating not only students, but also school children online as well as illiterate adults. It is performed online through placing video and audio presentations with assignments and feedback from the tutor. The university calls for providing other universities with autonomy for them to be able to use the utmost of their potential for bureaucracy not to interfere with the educational process.

Chapter 13 entitled *Taking a Strength-Based Approach: Bringing Student Homes into Schools during a Pandemic* composed by Jodie Hunter, Roberta Hunter, John Tupouniua, and Generosa Leach gives an outline of the work carried out in terms of school children learning mathematics under the supervision of university in the pandemic. In this context, New Zealand is portrayed as a country with tangible peoples distinction – the indigenous population does not always have due access to educational tools since they represent both lower socioeconomic as well as culturally and ethnically diverse groups. This way, the situation of home digital learning created for these students and their families an additional positive opportunity - to attend classes of mathematics without leaving home and get tutorial guidance through their studies. Many teachers perceived these synchronous lessons as an exclusive relationship creating process.

In *Chapter* under the heading *14 Supporting Schools in Times of Crisis: A Case of Partnerships and Networking with Schools the Institute of Education at the University of Lisbon* written by Estela Costa, Monica Baptista, and Nuno Dorotea, the authors dwell on Lisbon Institute's experience of collaboration with school clusters (1700 students), together coping with the maladies of the pandemic. The institute faced the necessity to manage two main problems – namely, to arrange longer-term projects with the purpose to improve students' learning through digital technologies as well as to enhance the teachers' capacity-building. The researchers came to the conclusion, that to make the process of online learning more successful, there should be first of all due support to the teachers provided in mastering online techniques and programs for them to acquire new skills but not merely upload students with extra paper work.

The Institute didn't not only come up with this research and training activities in undergraduate and graduate programs, but also established meaningful partnerships with various stakeholders of diverse levels of the education system.

Chapter 15 headlined *Educational Continuity During the COVID-19 Pandemic at Qatar Foundation's MultiverCity* authored by Buthaina Ali Al Nuaimi, Hend Zainal, and Francisco Marmolejo appears to describe a most substantial support coverage of the country's educational system from preschools to doctoral higher education by the Qatar Foundation (QF) providing multifocal development of the country in all the spheres. Apart from education, the foundation is a helping hand in supporting innovation, health, culture, and community

development. This case study examines the created synergies between Higher Education and Pre-University Education in the conditions of continuity and resilience during the pandemic all over Qatar. The Foundation provided online delivery of all the programs for learners, innovative professional development programs for teachers to back them up in new circumstances. The Foundation also initiated several international conferences to discuss the experience perspectives at the global level. The transition to digital education appeared to be rewarding since the Foundation has been cementing the links between all the education stakeholders for the past 25 years.

Chapter 16 under the headline *Supporting Elementary and Secondary Education During the Pandemic: A Case Study from the National Research University Higher School of Economics* written by Kosaretsky Sergey and Likhatskikh Elena, describes their experience during the pandemic of rendering support and even providing online university lessons and lectures to elementary and secondary schools of Russia. Bearing the responsibility for the well-being of the community, HSE took the effort of monitoring the situation in schools, leading supportive discussion, training school personnel, providing online instruction, helping students, parents and teachers in the lockdown, arranging online learning to guarantee the continuity of remote learning. As a result, the researchers concluded, that such challenges require an interdisciplinary approach.

Chapter 17 called *Community Building in Times of Pandemic: University Camilo José Cela, Spain* authored by Miguel Ángel Pérez Nieto, Nieves Segovia Bonet, Ignacio Sell Trujillo, and Carlota Tovar Pérez gives an overview of the unique experience of students participating in the educational process as teacher assistants to primary and secondary teachers. This collaboration is the most outstanding due to the number of students and schools involved and the efficiency of its implementation.

The greatest merit of the Spanish case is in the humanitarian aid provided to Syrian and Kenyan refugees in the form of educational support by the Spanish students and educators. Apart from classes, training and psycho-emotional assistance that volunteers from the bachelor's degree granted to children and families in social exclusion, Spanish teachers also provided educational methodologies and resources to refugee teachers.

Chapter 18 entitled *University-K-12 Collaboration During the Pandemic: The Case of Turkey* is preparedby Derin Atay. As the researcher claims, the shift from traditional to online learning was especially complicated for elementary and secondary schools. In this context, the Faculty of Educational Science of Bahçeşehir University of Turkey arranged systematic academic and psychological support not only to the students of the university under consideration, but also offered online training sessions and web seminars to the teachers of schools. Furthermore, they prepared a course of successful lectures for parents how to deal with stress, anxiety and exhaustion in the hard times. The collaboration proved to be highly fruitful and needs continuity.

The following two articles are fully devoted to the description of the situation in two higher institutions of the United States of America. *Thus, Chapter 19* headlined *Arizona State University: A Learning Enterprise Supporting P-12 Education in the COVID-19 Pandemic* by Carole G. Basile tells us that this university responded to the new reality quickly and effectively in rendering assistance to schools and concentrating its endeavors on the three main aspects of facing the challenges. Having worked out a solid base for online education the university provided support and curation to its feeder schools, continuously instructing the staff and granting free educational resources to the learners.

Chapter 20 under the title *MIT Full STEAM Ahead: Bringing Project-Based, Collaborative Learning to Remote Learning Environments* written by an extended group of American researchers- Claudia Urrea, Kirky Delong, Joe Diaz, Eric Klopfer, Meredith Thompson, Aditi Wagh, Jenny Gardony, Emma Anderson, and Rohan Kundargi appears to be the most informative and illustrative chapter of the monograph, equipped with an array of tables, bar charts, pie charts and pictures illustrating the students' performance.

The case is based on the initiative launched by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in response to the pandemic to support remote collaborative school learning and concentrates on the description of the learning packages usage, which were accessible on online platforms and available to learners all over the world. The learning packages covered various spheres of studies- from music to mathematics. As researchers claim, during the time of their usage, over 150.000 learners worldwide got access to the programs and materials.

Chapter 21 headlined *Initiatives to Promote School-Based Mental Health Support by Department of Educational Sciences, University of Education Under Vietnam National University* is composed by Hoang Phuong Hanh, Tran Thanh Nam, and Le Anh Vinh. This is an exceptional case study here in the book since the biggest and most reputable university of Vietnam, on par with online studies, concentrated its expertise on delivering psychological help and promoting mental health services to different groups engaged into the educational process – students and their parents, school staff, university educators and decision makers. The experiment was a great success as highly evaluated by all the stakeholders. The university under the consideration is ready to work on the resilience of the initiative and mobilize the resources to their full potential. The detailed description of the activities undertaken makes this chapter exceptionally valuable.

Chapter 22 called *Conclusions: What Innovations Resulted from University–School Collaborations During the COVID-19 Pandemic*?- summarized by the editors of the book - Fernando M. Reimers and Francisco Marmolejo is the last chapter of the monograph containing a detailed study of all the previous chapters. It points out the positive aspects the universities reached through their cooperation with schools, stakeholders and authorities in solving mutual problems of continuity with the due maintenance of educational programs sustainability in the pandemic.

As we can see, most of the case studies speculate on the aspects of education continuity online, support arrangement, extra educational opportunities for all which appeared to be crucial in the time of Pandemic. As the study shows, different countries and institutions had a different capacity, previous experience, resources and funding for combating the challenges and reaching their objectives. Nonetheless, they did their utmost and all their endeavor bore fruit.

Nevertheless, we find it our responsibility to highlight the most remarkable chapters with the cases, which are worthy looking up to. Firstly, it is the case of Chapter 5 of China, coming up with a clue of appointing different types of tutoring personnel in the universities and school in the emergence situations. Secondly, Chapter 13 – namely, the case of providing support to indigenous families in terms of studies. Thirdly, Chapter 17 gives a great tip of engaging students into the educational process of schools as teachers and assistants, which is rather novice speaking about online practice. Fourthly, Chapter 20 describing the case of online learning packages delivered to 150.000 students. The fifth remarkable case is Chapter 21 – with Vietnam university providing help with mental and psychological health of students of all levels, on par with all the stakeholders engaged.

Adding up to its acuteness, the book contains a number of valuable data and tips on coping with various educational challenges in the circumstances of any possible lockdown or emergency. The book is an excellent-quality, multi-faceted and up-to-date research that provides a detailed valuable analysis of 20 case studies of the world's universities and their experience of advantageous collaboration with schools in the times of global hardships.

In sum, the book is a precious and irreplaceable for the time being research on learning processes continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None declared.