Chapter 11

University of Guadalajara: Transforming and Innovating Through Stronger Collaboration Between Higher and Upper-Secondary Education During the Pandemic

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Abstract This chapter examines the context of higher education and upper-secondary education in Mexico, focusing on the role of the University of Guadalajara – the second largest in the country – and its response to the pandemic by strengthening collaboration with the upper-secondary system.

During the pandemic, the lack of articulation between higher education and upper-secondary education posed a challenge for the transition to online education in the University of Guadalajara. This chapter discusses how the different initiatives advanced by the University to face this unprecedented situation helped to reduce the barriers between these levels and led to academic innovation, resulting in valuable discussions on the educational model and teaching practices for the post-Covid-19 world.

Finally, the authors reflect on the views of faculty regarding the need for an innovative educational model, concluding that a closer collaboration between systems is needed for the benefit of students and faculty.

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11.1 National Context of Mexican Upper-Secondary and Higher Education

Mexican education authorities have made important efforts to widen access and improve the quality of higher education in recent years. As a result, from 2012 to 2018, enrollment in Mexican universities increased by almost 800,000 students (ANUIES, 2019). Additionally, a constitutional reform in 2019 made higher education compulsory and free by law. Although full gratuity and coverage are not near realities due to national fiscal constraints,¹ this legislation is a milestone toward complete access to higher education in the future (Tuirán, 2019).

However, the higher education accessibility gap among the Mexican population remains one of the most pressing challenges for the country, as higher education excludes millions of young people and enrollment rates remain comparatively low. In fact, among OECD countries, the average higher education enrollment rate is 59%, while Mexico's is only 39.7% (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2019); in the Latin American (LATAM) context, Mexico performs 6 percentage points below the regional mean of 45% (OECD, 2020). The magnitude of the challenge is exemplified in that only 56.3% of the inhabitants hold an upper-secondary education diploma and just 26% of young adults are expected to obtain a bachelor's degree. Moreover, 83% of those between 25 and 64 years old have not attended a higher education institution (OECD, 2020).

11.2 Challenges for Higher Education Institutions

Besides the tremendous disruption caused by the Covid-19 crisis, higher education institutions worldwide face a series of challenges that require urgent attention. On one hand, automation and advances in artificial intelligence are expected to change the future of work in a significant way, and as a result, 14% of jobs could be automated in the next 15–20 years. This means that 375 million workers worldwide will be forced to change occupations by 2030 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017). Thus, higher education institutions must prepare a greater number of students in STEM areas. Careers in STEM offer higher salaries than many traditional careers (OCDE, 2016). Increasing enrollment in these areas is both urgent and necessary; with better-paid graduates, universities can better fulfill their mission to facilitate social mobility. However, despite career guidance efforts, students continue to enroll in traditional careers, for which there are fewer available jobs. In Mexico, for instance, 43% of enrollment is concentrated in Social Sciences, Law, and Administration (ANUIES, 2019). Those same fields represent 35% of the total enrollment in Argentina, 42% in Brazil, and 47% in Colombia, indicating a structural problem in LATAM (OCDE, 2016).

¹ According to the Ministry of Finance, fiscal revenue in 2020 was projected to reach 13.4% of GDP, one of the lowest rates in Latin America and other OECD countries.

A hypothesis for this discrepancy between supply of graduates in various fields and occupations and demand for such graduates is the lack of structural connection between higher education and upper-secondary schools, which is a characteristic of Mexican and other LATAM countries' educational systems. Often, students do not know about higher education alternatives until they are enrolled in a particular career, at which point it is too late because transfer across careers is very challenging, if not impossible. The chronic disconnection between higher education (HE) and upper-secondary schools (USE) is the topic of this chapter, in which we present a case of collaboration between these two systems at the University of Guadalajara to better face the challenges from the Covid-19 crisis on teaching and learning practices.

11.3 The University of Guadalajara's Context

The University of Guadalajara (UdeG), also known as the University Network of Jalisco, is the second-largest public university in Mexico and considered to be the best public state university in terms of academic quality and relevance (according to QS and THE rankings). Its geographically distributed network of campuses allows the university to cover 109 of the 125 municipalities of Jalisco, therefore meeting the educational needs in nearly every region of the state. Like many universities in Mexico and LATAM, the University of Guadalajara also includes an upper-secondary system, and as is the case with other universities, there is a lack of systemic collaboration between the higher education institutions and their associated schools within the same university.²

With 15 campuses and 71 upper-secondary schools across the state of Jalisco, and an Online University System, UdeG enrolls a total of 291,600 students (161,357 upper-secondary students and 130,243 undergraduate and graduate students) (Universidad de Guadalajara, 2020a). The upper-secondary system (SEMS, its acronym in Spanish) is the largest system in the country at this level; it constitutes around 25% of the *public* enrollment nationwide and 50% of the *total* enrollment in the state of Jalisco (ANUIES, 2019) (Fig. 11.1).³

SEMS is also one of the most quality-oriented upper-secondary systems in the country. Since 2008, the Mexican government implemented a policy of quality certification for upper-secondary schools, measuring the status of teacher training, infrastructure, and procedural consistency. By adopting this national policy, SEMS became a leader of these standards, with active participation both in the discussions for what would later become the Common Curricular Framework and in the design of the national training strategy to standardize the pedagogical competencies of teachers at this educational level. Notwithstanding the quality credentials of SEMS,

²More than half of public state universities in Mexico, along with the National Autonomous University (UNAM), run upper-secondary schools.

³Calculations based on: ANUIES. (2019). Anuarios Estadísticos de Educación Superior 2018–2019. Available from: <http://www.anui.es.mx/informacion-y-servicios/informacion-estadistica-de-educacion-superior/anuario-estadistico-de-educacion-superior>

Fig. 11.1 University of Guadalajara, the University Network of Jalisco

this case study's theory of action is that increased structural collaboration between higher education and SEMS can help mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic.

11.4 Internal Governance and Collaboration Within UdeG

One of the main challenges for the university was the initial lack of systematic academic collaboration between the upper-secondary and higher education systems; although they are both part of UdeG, they do not usually cooperate. Ironically, both systems are recognized for their academic quality and relevance *individually*, but they seldom launch joint academic endeavors.

Part of this situation is due to internal governance. The University's organizational structure is composed of two main governmental bodies: The University Senate and the Council of Rectors. The Senate gathers representatives from three main groups: students, faculty, and administrative staff. Furthermore, each university campus and upper-secondary system has its own Council or Senate to deal with their affairs.

On the other hand, the Council of Rectors is the main executive body, comprised of rectors (chancellors) from each of the 15 campuses, the online system, and the upper-secondary system (SEMS). Unlike the Senate, the decisions made by the Council of Rectors are not legally binding, although its planning and consulting powers make this Council essential for university affairs. The Council of Rectors' mechanism of decision-making operates under the logic of one-person one-vote. While a democratic concept, it also highlights institutional inequities between the upper-secondary system and the higher education system, as the higher education level holds 16 out of 20 votes compared to one vote for the upper-secondary system.

Inequality, inconsistency and insufficient communication characterize the relationship between the two systems, producing other problems such as reduced collaboration between professors and students and loosely connected academic models. However, the pandemic triggered more systems-level collaboration to mitigate negative impacts on teaching and learning and incentivize innovation and alignment of educational models for the benefit of students and their academic success.

11.5 The Impacts of Covid-19: Online Transition in a Macro University

In Mexico, universities led the implementation of drastic measures to face the Covid-19 pandemic. On March 13, 2020, with only 15 confirmed cases in the country – and during uncertainty regarding the federal government's crisis response – the University of Guadalajara decided to cease face-to-face activities and announce the transition to online instruction. It was the first public university to implement this drastic but necessary decision. Following suit, other Higher Education Institutions

(HEI), including the National University (UNAM), announced the suspension of in-class instruction. As a result of the health emergency, more than 4.3 million students nationwide transitioned to the online education model. None were prepared to do so, and the most negatively impacted students were in the upper-secondary system.

The challenge was significant for a macro university. The disruption migrated roughly 60,000 courses to online instruction. The transition exacerbated some of the problems that already existed at the university, such as the insufficient Internet and technology access and skills to use them for teaching and learning among the academic community of professors and students. For instance, 32% of university students do not have a computer at home. In the upper-secondary system, 43% of students do not have a computer, and 23% do not have an Internet connection. These gaps in technological skill and Internet access presented a tremendous challenge for a successful transition to online education.

The University of Guadalajara launched a myriad of initiatives to face the pandemic and mitigate its negative effects within the university and in the broader context of Jalisco (see Table 11.1). However, the focus of this case study is the pedagogical intervention with upper-secondary professors, to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on teaching and learning practices.

Table 11.1 Projects and initiatives of UdeG to face the pandemic

	<p>“From Home”</p> <p>This project loaned laptops and tablets to students without a computer. In 3 months, this initiative allowed the university to distribute approximately 2100 computers to students from across the state of Jalisco, around 800 of which were distributed to upper-secondary school students. Thanks to this initiative, students successfully completed the semester online</p>
For students	<p>Portal “The University vs Covid-19”</p> <p>This portal was created to keep the academic community and broader society informed about the development and status of academic and administrative activities and useful teaching resources such as webinars, tutorials, and online courses for teachers and students. Site: http://www.udg.mx/es/tics-covid19/udgvscovid19</p>
	<p>Guidelines for the semester’s evaluation</p> <p>The university implemented flexible criteria to assess students, especially those more affected by the Covid-19 crisis. The heterogeneity of the students’ social, economic, and geographical backgrounds compelled the institution to adopt flexible standards within vulnerable populations</p>
For faculty members	<p>Online training program for faculty</p> <p>Developed by UdeG’s Online University System (SUV), the training program provided professors and students the tools to face the transition to virtual teaching. This portal includes a series of tutorials to help professors design their online courses – introducing online platforms such as Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom, Google Hangouts, and Google Meet, among others – and upload material, projects, and as well as register their students and schedule videoconferences</p> <p>Educational Innovation Network 360 (RIE)</p> <p>Nine Mexican Higher Education Institutions supplemented the existing Network for Innovative Education (RIE), a repository that gathers the universities’ educational resources, teaching tools, online courses, digital collections, and libraries with open access for professors around the country at all educational levels. Site: http://rie360.mx/</p>

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Table 11.1 (continued)

For the community at large	<p>Webinars UdeG</p> <p>As the pandemic's health complications have drastically affected the world's economic and social ecosystem, UdeG has offered a series of webinars focused on the educational, economic, and social impacts of Covid-19. Through these webinars, UdeG sought to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on different sectors of society. At least four of these webinars are focused on strategies to help education systems and professors cope with the pandemic. Site: http://www.webinars.udg.mx/</p>
	<p>UdeG's Covid-19 Situation Room</p> <p>The Health Sciences Campus of UdeG implemented the <i>UdeG's Covid-19 Situation Room</i>, comprised of academics and specialists in several fields including epidemiology and molecular biology. Its main purpose was to disseminate timely communication with the community about Covid-19 statistics and preventative measures. The Situation Room's recommendations to "flatten the curve" influenced the state government's virus prevention strategies and decisions</p>
	<p>Jalisco Active Radar Detection System (in collaboration with the state's government)</p> <p>This initiative aimed to offer 500 Covid-19 tests per day, with up to five thousand free tests sponsored by the university. UdeG set up a call center for people with Covid-19 symptoms, giving them the option to book an appointment at one of the multiple testing sites, which were associated with three diagnostic laboratories. This public health initiative through the university represented a paradigm shift in the detection of new cases</p>
	<p>Voluntary Isolation Center (in collaboration with the state's government)</p> <p>This center, located in UdeG's Villa Primavera Hotel, was available only for those with asymptomatic or mild cases of Covid-19 who cannot live at home due to their circumstances. Through this initiative, UdeG and the state's government aimed to reduce the risk of spreading the virus</p>
	<p>Campaign "Help others to stay at home"</p> <p>UdeG invited its academic and administrative staff to donate part of their salaries to purchase necessities, such as food and cleaning products, to the families of the students who lived in vulnerable situations due to the pandemic (Universidad de Guadalajara, 2020c). The community of UdeG responded enthusiastically, and soon approximately 10,000 workers had made their donations, raising approximately 13.5 million pesos (around 600,000 USD), and assisting 30,000 underprivileged families. The State's government joined this initiative, publicizing and supplementing it, through the program "Jalisco Without Hunger," doubling the number of donations to reach 60,000 households</p>

11.6 SEMS's Academic Response to Online Transition

Within the University Network, the SEMS pandemic response was quick and based on the specific characteristics and needs of their students, but generally independent from the higher education system. In this regard, SEMS's community took an eclectic approach by using some courses from other preparatory schools and communicating with students on social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

In addition, SEMS's Office for Teacher Training and Research launched the course "Tools for Distance Learning," informing professors on the means and resources for distance learning and emphasizing the main aspects for implementation of online courses. Over 1450 teachers from SEMS enrolled in this course.

To understand the situation of each preparatory school's academic in the transition, SEMS carried out a follow-up process and created two perception surveys: one for students and another for professors. These surveys revealed the specific conditions that the respondents were facing and their opinions regarding the abrupt online transition and the pandemic initiatives. These surveys revealed that 84% of the professors were using a digital platform for the development of online courses, although 62% stated that they have had some difficulties in using the different tools to continue their courses. The difficulties perceived by teachers underscored their stress levels resulting from insufficient prior experience and skills using technology for teaching. Likewise, in the student survey, 86% of respondents stated that their teachers established strategies to continue the class remotely; however, 64% said that they had difficulties in carrying out their activities online, while 44% expressed that they did not know how to use the different platforms.

The training initiatives offered permanently to faculty members of UdeG support the adaptation to the new educational challenges, aiding their adequate response and flexibility to new circumstances throughout this health emergency. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the online transition has not only required the use of computer tools and training faculty in this regard, but also required an ambitious process of teacher training to achieve the development of pedagogical strategies that allow for quality interactions between students and teachers.

11.7 Academic Innovation Through Collaborative Teacher Training Between Higher Education and SEMS: Rethinking Our Educational Model in the Face of the Pandemic

The pandemic represented an urgent challenge to rapidly re-train faculty to manage the online teaching transition, especially at the upper-secondary level. As a university network with decentralized campuses and systems, the heterogeneous responses resulted in some campuses better prepared than others to cope with the virtual teaching environment. The pandemic also represented an opportunity to rethink the academic model, with renewed collaboration between the upper-secondary schools and higher education campuses to potentially reduce the cultural and imaginary barriers between the two systems.

By the end of March, during intense discussions regarding rapid trainings for our professors and academic model restructuring, we decided that the situation involved a massive scale. UdeG has over 17,000 professors, 8000 of which are at the upper-secondary level. Of those, approximately 6000 are full-time professors; 1700 of those work for SEMS. We needed a rapid and substantial intervention to reach the full-time professors as the first stage.

With those considerations, the Chief Academic and Innovation Office of UdeG and the directorate of SEMS proposed an online training program to our University President, one that could reach 6000 full-time professors. This program was

designed in collaboration with one of our key international partners, Arizona State University (ASU), which is regarded as the most innovative university in the United States and a leader in online and digital learning. This six-week online academic program, called “The Era of Active Learning,” was an unprecedented initiative for massive training for both higher education and upper-secondary education faculty. It was the first time our two systems were discussing and rethinking the academic model and challenges of the University *together*, as a single institution.

“The Era of Active Learning” program was facilitated by experts from ASU and supported by 160 UdeG’s academic advisors and mentors, especially from our Online University System (SUV), to support more than 3000 professors from the first of two cohorts of this program.⁴

This program was aimed at encouraging reflection and discussion around active and adaptive learning in online educational contexts, blended models, and in situations where the use of technology is either not possible or not even an option. Most importantly, this course was not made for professors with previous experience in the use of technologies but for any faculty members interested in better navigating the online transition.

Roughly 1000 SEMS professors and 2000 higher education professors registered in the first phase. The joint experience has allowed professors to interact and share ideas, experiences, and practices about teaching and online education. In addition, the learning environment created in Google Classroom encouraged professors to discuss important topics on the future of higher education, the relevance of their job, and the focus on student achievement. *The important lesson of this case study is that, for the first time in many years, a teacher-training program was designed without separating SEMS and the higher education system, instead promoting their joint discussion on the pedagogical and organizational challenges to better face the pandemic’s disruption* (Fig. 11.2).

Fig. 11.2 An innovative academic model for UdeG

⁴The 2nd cohort will be offered in August to the remaining 3000 professors.

11.8 What Does Our Faculty Think? The Emerging Discussion Over an Innovative Educational Model and the Articulation Between Systems

The discussions and dialogues occurring throughout this learning experience have been a reminder of the urgent need – and convenience – to transform our model for the “new post-pandemic normal” through deeper collaboration between SEMS and the higher education system for the benefit of our students in the transition from upper-secondary to higher education.

To collect empirical evidence for this case study and to support institutional decision-making processes, we implemented an evaluation through a survey and a focus group. In this section, we present some results on the perception of faculty from both systems. During the Fall 2021 semester, we will survey the students to gather data on the impacts of this learning intervention.

Four important findings resulted from this exercise: an emerging discussion over an innovative educational model, a consensus on the need for closer collaboration between the two systems, an idea of generating equal and similar training programs for all faculty, and an identification of some challenges and subsequent proposals. The consensus is that the pandemic has forced the university to better integrate these two systems for the benefit of both SEMS and HE students and professors. More importantly, this determination is supported from the bottom up, not just from the top down.

A. “The Ideal Class for Every Student”: The Emerging Discussion over an Innovative Educational Model

The environment created by the teacher training programs has prompted a discussion on how to innovate the University’s academic model. The traditional in-class, teacher-centered approach has garnered criticism due to its inefficacy in online teaching.

Moreover, the current academic breakthrough has allowed many professors to communicate for the first time with educational technological resources such as Moodle, Google Classroom, and Zoom, and therefore begin discussions on different ideas and concepts related to academic models and online education. Furthermore, thousands of teachers who have at least some backgrounds over online and blended education are taking the reflections further toward the reconceptualization of dominant pedagogical strategies.

Thus, the discussion has been centered not only on how to attain a more innovative academic model with adaptive, active, and hybrid features, but also on how to better articulate the upper-secondary and higher education systems. Naturally, the new model is expected to allow UdeG to improve the quality of the education delivered and therefore to graduate more competent students across all academic levels.

According to some professors, the characteristics of an innovative model are very relevant. For instance, Professor L.A.S. stated that:

Definitively, active, and adaptive learning is the present and future of education; it is not only important to make teachers' jobs easier, but mainly to influence even more students' learning in the subject they need most.

Likewise, Professor C.R.V.L. said that:

Adaptive learning is the ideal class for every student since adapting to each student's knowledge and skills will help them to achieve better learning outcomes.

In addition, J.E.R. complemented:

Adaptive learning is a very good option to help the students who did not develop enough skills in the previous academic level.

An academic model with hybrid and adaptive features facilitated the online transition caused by the Covid-19 crisis, and it is also transforming mindsets within the academic community:

S.O.V expressed that:

Adaptive learning models allow to meet the needs and exigencies of new generations of students.

On the hybrid model, Teacher A.R. believed that:

The hybrid model could be easily adapted to the context we are currently facing, and it will certainly become a very important system for the learning-teaching process soon. This model merges the best of the in-person and the online models, encouraging the students to participate actively in their learning process, developing self-study, autonomy, and the use of information technologies.

This model leads teachers to use different platforms to structure their courses, implementing strategies such as the flipped classroom, where teachers change their leading role by solving doubts, organizing debates, and deepening knowledge, seeking to improve their students' learning.

Similarly, Professor M.R.G. stated that:

Implementing the hybrid model is both a challenge and a commitment for teachers since it requires professors to redesign their instruction strategies. It is not only about sharing concepts and definitions, but it also involves preparing students to face life and make the best decisions, prepare them for the labor market and, above all, encourage them to always have the desire to learn and excel, to be self-sufficient, and develop their knowledge and skills and put these aspects into practice.

Importantly, M.I. reflected about the teacher's role in this new model:

[Training programs] made me realize that professors must never stop learning and must apply different models according to the needs of their students. It is important to use the resources that are already available and be creative to face the challenges of education at our university.

B. "Unite as a University": Closer Collaboration Between Upper-Secondary and Higher Education Systems Is Needed

Although there was a structural disarticulation in the University, no internal joint efforts had been implemented yet to fix that problem. Instead, this lack of connection and minimal collaboration had reflected the separated educational levels (SEMS

is perceived as the younger brother of the HE system). The pandemic is changing that perception. As the following statements show, the professors who participated in the focus group emphasized the need to work together *as a single university* to better educate students.⁵

Professor T.T. stated that:

The pandemic and its consequences in the educational sector, allowed us to unite as a university and share experiences with other professors to find out what works and what does not work, enriching thus the transition process to online education.

Likewise, according to Professor R.M.:

Although this course was created to respond to the current situation, we are facing due to Covid-19, it has certainly been very significant for all teachers. The fact that there are both SEMS and higher education teachers in this course allows us to see what the successful experiences of higher education professors are, and which can be helpful for teachers of upper-secondary education.

Similarly, E.H. highlighted that:

Initiatives like the one implemented by the Academic and Innovation Office and SEMS [common training programs] promote the integration of learning communities inside the University of Guadalajara, regardless of the educational level.

C. “Break Down the Walls”: The Generation of Equal and Alike Training Programs

Despite the noticeable differences that feature upper-secondary education and higher education, the focus group’s participants discussed the need to build common teaching capacities among the academic community of UdeG. Although this was an approach defended mainly by the professors of SEMS, the higher education faculty members supported it too.

Professors from the upper-secondary level spoke more profusely. In T.T.’s words:

This confinement made us realize that both, SEMS, and higher education professors, are equals. I have experienced and perceived a significant disconnection in the past between these educational levels, even though we are in the same university, and when I started the course taught by ASU, I felt a little strange. However, when we are interacting with each other we are equals, we even require the same training and we have been equally affected during this contingency.

If we are talking about teachers, no matter what level they are at, we must all have pedagogical strategies and technological tools to innovate. Therefore, these courses should be available for every professor at the University of Guadalajara, regardless of the area and educational level in which they are.

Teacher training initiatives are important for the University of Guadalajara, particularly because they have proven to be useful to ensure that teachers act more as teachers regardless of their professional background.

Teachers face the same issues, regardless of the educational level they teach. This course allowed us to communicate with other professors, sharing our experiences and problems faced during the online transition.

⁵The professors’ statements will be identified by their initials.

V.D., an upper-secondary professor, explained the idea in these terms:

We must have pedagogical strategies and technological tools equally, both for professors of SEMS and those in higher education. We are all teachers of UdeG and have the same needs, and we need to be offered courses available for the whole academic community to teach us how to make a good video, how to make a good questionnaire or reflection questions, how to upload them to the platform for our students to answer them, which platform is the most suitable for our course, how to apply online exams, among other aspects. Likewise, it is important that all professors at the University of Guadalajara learn how to teach online, how to develop good skills and learning strategies, and how to write good instructions so that students answer correctly and do the activities that the professor asks for.

Two additional professors from higher education shared that:

S.F.: There is a big gap in the use and knowledge of educational platforms between levels. However, the technological tools should be the same for all and the university should help professors to achieve this.

M.H.: These training courses have been very helpful to prepare us and to break down these walls that exist between one level and the other. It was difficult for many teachers to migrate their courses to the online modality. It is important to note that what can be useful for the instruction at one level, can work on the other in the same way.

D. “Make the Transition Between Levels Easier for Students”: Challenges and Proposals

To address the structural disconnection between the two educational levels, the focus group’s participants noted several challenges and suggested some ideas to strengthen collaboration. Concerns related to the need for more leadership and involvement of the University’s central authorities, common training programs for both levels, and joint efforts to improve the upper-secondary students’ education.

In this sense, V.D. mentioned that:

First, it is very important to me that a training course for both upper-secondary and higher education is being undertaken for the first time. I have taught at both levels and have experienced first-hand the low level of collaboration between systems. Despite the efforts of some prep schools to create links with the different university centers of UdeG, none have succeeded.

I believe that the authorities of the University of Guadalajara should generate that synergy in which teachers at both levels can receive this type of training and engage in joint learning communities.

This pandemic has shown us that teachers of all levels must have their courses available online. Those of us who lack the technological skills to have our courses online must have support. We need training. It is very important for the University of Guadalajara to continue offering massive training courses equally for upper-secondary and higher education professors.

B.V. emphasized that there is an opportunity to prepare prep school students better, increasing their access to higher education:

I think that the joint work between upper-secondary and higher education systems is important. If we worked together at both levels, some areas of opportunity that have already been identified with respect to the students could be strengthened. Likewise, working together could make the transition between levels easier for students, allowing teachers to identify and give more attention to those students who need more help.

On training programs, T.T. stated that:

A common program for professional development should be created for all teachers at the University of Guadalajara, regardless of the educational level at which they teach. SEMS has its own program of teacher training, which offers courses for the teachers at the upper-secondary level. We should integrate better.

Likewise, more specific strategies were mentioned, M.H.:

By identifying the needs of both levels, the University of Guadalajara can create common repositories with the materials that could be helpful to fulfill these needs, making these materials available for all the academic community of UdeG, including faculty and students.

Communication channels could be created in collaboration with the upper-secondary level so that not only the weaknesses of the students that we identify at the higher education level, but also the weaknesses that have been identified before by the upper-secondary professors can be addressed, allowing us to create a balance among our students.

Furthermore, higher education teachers could help upper-secondary ones to create materials that can be useful in their classes. In that sense, the creation of common repositories could be a very good opportunity for our university.

11.9 Conclusions

No single institution worldwide was prepared for the Covid-19 pandemic. Universities are solving problems and learning in the process. One current ongoing challenge is to develop academic continuity strategies for the fall semester to minimize risk and maximize learning experiences. But this immediate concern must not obscure the most important one: the mid- and long-term transformation of our universities for the benefit of our students and society at large.

Crises are superb opportunities to accelerate necessary changes. At the University of Guadalajara, we face the same difficulties as before Covid-19, but those challenges have become more pressing. One of those challenges is the one presented in this case study: the need to improve the learning outcomes and the academic transition of our students through a better collaboration between higher education and preparatory schools. The pandemic presents a unique opportunity to overcome resistance and persistence in addressing a situation that needed attention long ago.

The case study presented is only an example of the many areas in which SEMS and the HE system of UdeG must work closer together for the benefit of our students and professors. A collaborative path has been presented by a teacher training program, aimed at improving the learning experiences of both upper-secondary and higher education students during the pandemic. It is now our responsibility as executives to build on this momentum and develop more structural approaches for irreversible articulation. UdeG is a single university, and we need to develop a coherent academic model, one that is more active, adaptive, and technologically rich. Our preparatory and higher education students, as well as our professors, need to have the same educational experience. In this sense, we simply cannot return to the “status quo.”

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