



| Editorial note

An issue that can be found globally in education across different areas, contexts, and levels. The term “early leaving” has been defined at least in a handful of different ways; however, these different definitions all agree, at some level, that early leaving and/or school dropout occurs when students do not complete their studies, whether it be a voluntary or involuntary decision.

Previous research points to a diversity of causes that influence early leaving and student dropout. The most frequent reasons can be grouped into academic, economic, socioemotional, as well as administrative causes. In order to design effective strategies to help reduce and prevent this problem, it is of great importance to first know the causes that led students to abandon their studies. It is understandable that there may be certain causes (i.e., family-related problems, economic disadvantages, social issues) that impact students’ decisions and cannot be directly attributed to the educational institution. However, it is the responsibility of the institution to create holistic strategies that respond to causes related to students’ academic needs, as well as programs that help students face the personal, economic, and socioemotional challenges faced during their academic studies.

Early leaving is a phenomenon that has become even more aggravated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics indicate that more students have abandoned their studies at different educational levels during and as a result of the worldwide health pandemic. Therefore, *Emerging Trends in Education* devoted a thematic issue to welcome contributions from national and international scho-

lars interested in disseminating current research related to student dropout.

Most of the manuscripts included in this thematic issue have resulted from a collaborative project coordinated by the research group ‘Cuerpo Académico de Educación Integral (CADEI)’ at the Autonomous University of the State of Quintana Roo (UQROO). In this project, six public universities in Mexico, located in the northern, central, and southern regions of the country, participated. The project was financed by the ‘Programa para el Desarrollo Profesional Docente (PRODEP),’ in the call for proposals ‘Convocatoria de Fortalecimiento a Cuerpos Académicos (2020).’ Among the universities that participated, we find the Universidad Veracruzana, Universidad de Guanajuato, Universidad Juárez del Estado de Durango, Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana, and the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla.

The first manuscript in this thematic issue studied early leaving at the Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Tabasco (UIET). Using a gender-focused quantitative study, Negrín et al. show a general panorama of the phenomenon in their institution. Their findings suggest that it is mainly men who drop out of school permanently during their first semester. They also found that the most frequent cause is related to academic failure.

Houde et al. also conducted a study on early leaving at the Universidad de Guanajuato. The study aimed to explore the causes for which students enrolled in two undergraduate teacher preparation programs abandoned their studies. Using a case study design, their findings



suggest that causes are multi-factorial, including both personal- and institutional-related causes.

Similarly, Narváez Trejo et al. conducted a qualitative study at a university located in southeastern Mexico. Using a case study design, they explored the causes for which students in an undergraduate teacher preparation program dropped out of their studies. Their findings demonstrate, once again, that there are multiple causes that are interrelated, causing students to drop out; to mention some of the most significant ones, they reported career choice, teachers, and school administration.

The study conducted by Negrete Cetina et al. also took place in southeastern Mexico. The authors report on a case study that included 118 people who abandoned their undergraduate or graduate studies on five different campuses of the University. Their findings agree with the previous two studies in that early leaving is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon. They pointed to three main types of causes that impact students' decisions to abandon their studies, namely academic, personal, and economic causes.

The miscellaneous section includes three manuscripts related to governance in colleges of education in Saudi Arabia universities, the relationship between university and society, and the connection between marketing models and higher education in the 21st century.

In the interview section, readers can find an interesting conversation between Deon Heffington and a professor from the Universidad Veracruzana, Dr. Ragueb Chain Revuelta, related to early leaving, student dropout, and academic failure. In his intervention, Dr. Chain Revuelta discusses how research on the topic is frequently oriented and analyzed from the perspective of the researcher; in this sense, the variables found to cause early leaving are based on who's studying them. He concludes his intervention by highlighting the importance of preparing and urging school administrators and educators to deve-

lop attitudes and aptitudes to identify possible risks early on in students' academic careers.

Finally, in the last section of this thematic issue, Abreu-Cornelio offers an entertaining and critical review of the book "El secreto del hombre-lobo," making emphasis on the importance of literature and its pedagogical implications.

The manuscripts included in this thematic issue intersect strategically in the realm of higher education. Different issues related to this educational level are presented. Furthermore, the authors agree on the importance of developing actions from different points of view, the educational institution, including its administrators and governance, teachers and students, as well as through outreach programs with the society.

We hope that this thematic issue opens a space for deep reflection and discussion of the common problems faced by institutions in higher education and that impact – both directly and indirectly – at different levels and contexts, from the classroom itself to educational policies, which will help guarantee institutions are offering an education of excellence.

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