

EDITORIAL

Virtual Collaborative Learning: Engaging the Learner and the Learning Environment

To respond to the emerging of virtual learning, in this special issue, we are seeking papers that introduce research and practice-based work in virtual and collaborative learning that incorporates a globally connected world; in which students communicate and collaborate via online platforms. This special issue is devoted to the topic of virtual collaborative learning with its research implications and practical ideas from multidisciplinary point of view. In this issue, authors from different disciplines presented their ideas, research, cases for students in K-12 classrooms, teacher education programs, as well as liberal arts programs.

First article titled “Pre-service Teachers and Interdisciplinary Design in Global Virtual Teams: A U.S. Perspective” by Chen focused on investigating the use of virtual global teams in teacher education programs with a focus on preparing pre-service teachers’ technology integration and interdisciplinary collaboration. Chen employed a qualitative approach to understand the experiences of pre-service teachers in virtual collaborative design teams. The findings revealed that preservice teachers became more motivated for technology integration and demonstrated increased awareness of cross-cultural communication and collaborations. This article showcased a project that has implications for teacher educators to incorporate team structures fused with collaborative workspace to allow synchronous and asynchronous activities among virtual team members, as well as providing multiple forms of support to facilitate team communication in global virtual teams.

The second paper titled “Virtual Reality in ESL Teacher Training: Practical Ideas” authored by Zhang surveyed the literature in adopting Virtual Reality into K-12 classrooms, and provided practical curriculum examples in incorporating (VR) into teaching English Learners (ELs). From the linguistic and multimodality perspective, Zhang provided readers and teacher educators guidance in considering incorporating virtual reality to facilitate virtual learning with emphasis on English as Second Language learning.

The third paper in this issue is titled “Creating Audio Books for Children with Visual Impairment: The Collaborative Approach Leading to Virtual Learning”. In this paper, Guha presented a study focusing on the collaborative approach of learning in designing audio books to special needs students. Guha outlined the process and the steps that facilitated the collaborative project, and Guha found that though pre-service teachers thought the project is time-consuming yet it had positive impact on their teaching practices and careers.

In the fourth article in this issue “Virtual Classroom Experiences for Second Language Learning and Cultural Exchange”, Petropoulou presented a case in adopting virtual classroom for second language learning in a college French class. The cultural exchange among U.S. college students and French college students were studied. Petropoulos presented the design of the virtual classroom exchange, and the lessons for college instructors to design and implement similar experiences in their classrooms.

In summary, four articles in this issue discussed the idea of virtual collaborative learning through different lenses and focused on different learner populations, and it is the editor’s hope that this issue shed lights on advancing the teaching practices in using virtual tools in K-16 classrooms.

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Guest Editor