



**Call for Papers: Special Issue on
*Research Methods on Virtual Exchange:
Frameworks and Challenges***

Interested authors can submit their proposals to jve.researchmethods@gmail.com

Guest Editors

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About this Special Issue

The Unicollaboration association and the *Journal of Virtual Exchange* have, among other goals, the objective to sustain and develop telecollaboration and virtual exchange through reflexive practice and research. On the one hand, reflective practice resulting in reports is meant to produce permanent traces of pedagogical innovations, allowing them to be adopted in other contexts or to inspire other initiatives. On the other hand, reflective practice and other forms of research play an important role in shaping a critical approach keeping the pedagogical objectives in the front of the picture and challenging discourses of innovation solely based on technological innovation. Last but not least, research on telecollaboration and VE needs to contribute to the production of knowledge about the many factors that concur in learning and education in hybrid and/or online contexts as well as the interactions among those factors. The aim of this special issue is to inquire the forms of research that can answer questions raised by cross-disciplinary pedagogical practices as well as the issues and challenges that such research raises at the epistemological and ethical levels. Even if other publications undertook a similar endeavour (i.e. Dooly & O’Dowd, 2012), the current developments of VE and its institutionalisation raise new questions, which need pluri-, inter- or trans-disciplinary approaches (Nicolescu, 1996) to be dealt with.

In the opening article of this journal, Robert O’Dowd observed two “paths” taken by telecollaboration (O’Dowd, 2018, p. 11): intercultural communication in the wild and large institutionalised projects. The first of them can be characterised by what Steve Thorne (2010) has called ‘intercultural communication in the wild’, which could be roughly defined as situated social activities where informal learning can take place online. ‘Rewilding’ online learning implies not only multiple interactions the learners can engage in, but also, possibly, multiple platforms for the interactions between the same interlocutors (Garcia et al., 2017). This raises the question of what methods can be elaborated both for data collection and for data analysis, especially since some of these platforms are beyond the teacher’s (and the researcher’s) control. The second path is the one of large institutionalised projects, usually exploiting a single platform and resulting in large amount of data. In this case, which methodologies or combination thereof would allow insights on general trends? What is/can be the role of, for instance, learning analytics, artificial intelligence, natural language processing to study these data? What is their possible place in mixed methods combining quantitative and qualitative studies?

Another strand of inquiry concerns the relationships between online and offline interactions in hybrid environments. Firstly, integrated VE being a form of blended learning, online and offline interactions between learners have been explored to build models making the most of their combination (e.g. Cultura. Furstenberg et al., 2001). However, research in telecollaboration and virtual exchange only seldom takes into account the continuity of online and offline interactions, which results in a partial view of the learners’ experience. Secondly, even if models exist that

integrate different levels of interaction (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006; Rivens Mompean & Cappellini, 2015), to our knowledge there have not been attempts to comprehensively examine the complex interactions across levels. Such empirical analysis is especially needed when the dissemination of a VE model is concerned, in order to identify which factors intervene for a successful project to be implemented and replicated, not only at the pedagogical, but also at the organisational level. In this sense, which interdisciplinary approaches can be conceived to deal with the different levels, from the psychological level of learning and development to the sociological level of the organisation and the wider level of (inter)national educational policies?

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Submissions

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submission will be in two copies: the first containing the author(s) affiliation and contacts, the second will be anonymous.

Production timeline

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