Melinda Dooly & Robert O'dowd

Series Editors' Preface

This series is dedicated to promoting a wider understanding of the activity of telecollaboration in educational settings. Since the first book that was published in this series in 2010 (Guth & Helm), this practice has grown extensively and the ways in which online or digital exchanges are referred to, defined and applied to teaching vary greatly, depending on the context and content of the exchanges; so much so that we have taken some time in our introductory chapter of this volume to reflect on this.

From the first volume published in this series onwards, we have defined 'telecollaboration' as referring to the pedagogical processes and outcomes of engaging learners in different geographical locations in virtual contact together, mediated through the application of online communication tools such as e-mail, synchronous chat and threaded discussion as well as the tools of Web 2.0 such as wikis, blogs, social networking and 3D virtual worlds. The application of such activity may include different subject areas (e.g. Foreign Language Education, History, Science) as well as different educational contexts, including but not limited to primary, secondary, university and adult education. In our introductory chapter, we offer more extensive definitions of the word, as well as discussion of other terms that have been used recently, such as 'virtual exchange', 'teletandem' and 'online intercultural exchange' –all of which have salient reasons for being applied to the practice of intercultural exchanges between geographically distanced individuals or group, facilitated through communication media. However, in the end, we have opted in this volume to continue with the term 'telecollaboration' for various motives, not least of which is the long and well-documented history of telecollaborative research and practice in foreign language education.

And yet, despite a long tradition, telecollaboration is still not as predominant in educational practices as one might hope, particularly in primary and secondary education. This may be due to a dearth of examples and models of telecollaborative exchanges carried out by teachers. The case studies included here are written by teachers, who like so many

other educators around the world, are 'making do' with few resources, lots of imagination, combined with enthusiasm and interest for innovating their own teaching methodologies. With this in mind, our sixth book in the series highlights meaningful experiences in telecollaboration and virtual exchange, described by practicing teachers and teacher candidates who have empirical knowledge of designing, implementing and assessing innovative transglobal projects. These cases can serve current and future primary and secondary school teachers who wish to learn more about this type of language education approach. The chapters include descriptions of contextualized telecollaboration projects, focusing on challenges encountered before, during or after the telecollaborative exchange. The authors outline the solutions and strategies they found for these problems and even offer examples of materials they designed for the exchanges, as well as discussing the technological resources they found to be most useful.

The volume aims to provide a space for teachers' voices in the nexus between research and practice through their narratives of their own experiences. The content in this book applies to different levels of education and learner ages (from early childhood to early secondary school education) and gives refreshing insight into authentic experiences, including frank discussion by these practitioners of obstacles and difficulties that emerged during their exchanges. The teachers' voices sing throughout these case studies, demonstrating how research and practice on telecollaboration can be synthesized while making both the underlying theories and the practical steps for undertaking similar exchanges accessible to the busy teacher of today.

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4 March 2018

References

Guth, S., & Helm, F. (Eds.) (2010). *Telecollaboration 2.0: Language, literacy and intercultural learning in the 21st Century*. Bern: Peter Lang.