

A Global Citizenship Approach to Virtual Exchange: Opportunities and Challenges

Virtual Exchange (VE) refers to the numerous online learning initiatives and methodologies which engage learners in online collaborative learning and interaction with partners from different cultural backgrounds as part of their study programmes and under the guidance of educators.

Although VE has been employed in Foreign Language education for over 25 years, it has received much greater attention since the recent COVID-19 pandemic and many practitioners are exploring its potential to develop intercultural competence and global citizenship in their classrooms (Porto, 2018; Ramirez, 2019; Trapé, 2018). Global citizenship has itself become a key objective of international education at university level. Porto (2014) defines it as integrating “the pillar of intercultural communicative competence from foreign language education with the emphasis on civic action in the community from citizenship education” (p. 5).

In this presentation I will use key publications from the literature to explore how VE can promote approaches to global citizenship education and I will endeavor to illustrate how VE based on Global citizenship differs to traditional approaches to telecollaborative learning. I will also reflect on the challenges educators face as we try to use this activity to deal with issues of diversity and inclusion and to establish equitable relationships with partners in the global south.

O’Dowd, R. (2023). *Internationalising higher education and the role of virtual exchange*. Routledge.

Porto, M. (2018). Affordances, complexities, and challenges of intercultural citizenship for foreign language teachers. *Foreign Language Annals*, 52(1), 141–164. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12375>

Ramirez, C. K. de. (2019). Global Citizenship Education Through Collaborative Online International Learning in the Borderlands: A Case of the Arizona–Sonora Megaregion: *Journal of Studies in International Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315319888886>

Trapè, R. (2019). Building Empathy and Intercultural Citizenship through a Virtual Exchange Project. *Le Simplegadi*, 19, 167–180. <https://doi.org/10.17456/SIMPLE-136>

A list of resources on Virtual Exchange curated by the author can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fbQ1xpPM_HHBiOlulk_mISN0MkgrRyZpVM4ITx-BrM0/edit?usp=sharing