

## **Preface**

# **Communication is RObust when NAtions Come Together: The Importance of Collaboration during a Global Crisis**

In times of global unprecedented circumstances, people realise more than ever the importance of communication and interaction. The human mind is an ever-ending source of creativity and determination to keep communicating against all odds. In an era when the global population is on lockdown, humans need to react to this situation and find means that still bring them together and help continue educating, innovating and communicating.

Walt Whitman, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century American poet of the people, remains for some the quintessential voice of the yet-unrealized American spirit. Emerging from the throes of the American Civil War—one that literally pitted families against each other in mortal combat—Whitman and the nation could not have been blamed if all ceded the dream of peace and prosperity, of individuality and tolerance, of initiative and respect. Clearly, the American nation has an opportunity to revive that dream. But Whitman embraced and expressed the dream that lived in him:

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,  
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,  
Listening to others, considering well what they say,  
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,  
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.

Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road" (Section 5 excerpt)

*Leaves of Grass* (1856 collection)

Although many around the world might recognize *Leaves of Grass* as one of the finest collections of poetry, not as many know that its author, Whitman, served as a volunteer hospital nurse during the bloody sieges of that horrific war. In fact, using today's lexicon, Whitman would be considered an essential front-line worker. Perhaps that existential period woke Whitman to the realities that must be faced in a world of challenges. While *Leave of Grass* preceded that war, his subsequent collections like *Drum Taps* directly responded to it:

I am faithful, I do not give out,  
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,  
These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in my breast  
a fire, a burning flame.)

Walt Whitman, "The Wound-Dresser" (Section 3 excerpt)

*Drum Taps* (1865 collection)

We, as educators, are not on that same front line of either Whitman nor today's healthcare heroes—but we are on another. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us to awaken and create a new dream for higher education. Despite being a pale comparison, our responses now and in the future can be "loos'd of limits and imaginary lines" as we embrace "a fire, a burning flame". We need not accept what Hodges and colleagues term "Emergency Remote Teaching" (2020), yet we can build upon its strengths and improve upon its weaknesses. For that same duality of rigour and innovation, Whitman himself supported the use of evidence to reach outcomes: "I like the scientific spirit—the holding off, the being sure but not too sure, the willingness to surrender ideas when the evidence is against them: ...it always keeps the way beyond open" (1888).

The authors in this Special Issue touch upon these three aspects of the spirit dreamt by Whitman: being unchained from what has been, keeping the fire for what has not yet been, and bridging both with an innovative rigour.

Contributions from different countries and educators (Singapore, Greece, Australia, UK, Denmark, Canada, USA, Japan) discuss innovative practices on education, leadership, and communication to show how people, especially the teaching and professional community, can adapt and continue to communicate, exchange, and educate, even during and after these unprecedented circumstances of crisis like the COVID-19 global crisis.

More particularly, this issue focuses on themes that involve pedagogy in different places and universities around the world during the time of this pandemic; how education leaders and leadership in general respond, or should respond, to the COVID-19 crisis; and ways to engage students into collaborative learning.

*Robert J. Bonk, Margarita Kefalaki, Jürgen Rudolph, Fotini Diamantidaki, Carolin Rekar Munro, Sophie Karanicolas, Paraskevi Kontoleon, and Karl-Heinz Pogner*, sign the first paper of this Special issue, entitled “***Pedagogy in the Time of Pandemic: From Localisation to Glocalisation***”. This paper describes how higher education institutes around the world have responded to COVID-19. Authors have captured anecdotal responses within and across countries (seven institutions of higher education in Singapore, Greece, Australia, United States, United Kingdom, Denmark, and Canada) that may highlight trends for later consideration.

“***Leading with Emotional Intelligence: How Leaders in a Diverse-Based Urban College in New York Successfully Responded to the COVID-19 Crisis of 2020***” is the second paper of this issue, authored by *Michael Anibal Altamirano & Carlos E. Rios-Collazo*. Their article describes how a small educational institution serving a diverse group of urban, under-represented, and international adult students managed to successfully operate amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion provides insights on leadership initiatives that rely on emotional intelligence to maintain student retention, enrolment, motivation, and to protect its human capital (Altamirano & Collazo, 2020).

*Nathaniel Herbst* is the third author in this issue, presenting his research article “**SHARE leadership to solve global problems**”. Leadership sharing as a collaborative approach is necessary for a universal mitigation is proposed in this research as a way to solve global problems. This paper presents a review of a collection of the literature that has surfaced five elements, crucial for effectively sharing leadership. These can be summarized into the SHARE acronym: Strengthening relationships, Having a clear structure, Addressing problems collaboratively, Releasing information, and Enlisting diverse strengths (Herbst, 2020). A more robust implementation of these five features is proposed by the author to be able lead to stronger shared leadership and better outcomes in the coronavirus pandemic. Fostering these attributes in the global community will undoubtedly make the world better prepared to adequately address future crises.

The last paper of this issue is entitled “**Maintaining and enhancing students' collaborative learning in a Japanese EFL higher education context**”, and authored by *Masayo Kanno*. Her paper reports on a teacher’s ongoing efforts in Japan to develop and deliver distance-learning English as a foreign language (EFL) courses in a higher education context. Drawing on a view that learning is social development, the researcher focuses on the concept of social presence in peer-to-peer communication that could enhance collaborative learning in a virtual classroom (Kanno, 2020).

We thank all of our contributors for this special issue and we hope that our collaborations and endeavours at the international level remain strong, instilling hope and imagination. **Enjoying the journey and not the goal. Enjoying the journey for the wealth of exchanges and experiences, we gain along the way.**

In Cavafy’s famous poem ‘Ithaca’ (1975) the poet skilfully presents us with this wish, that the road indeed remains a long one:

**‘As you set out for Ithaka  
hope your road is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery.  
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,  
angry Poseidon—don’t be afraid of them:  
you’ll never find things like that on your way**

**as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,  
as long as a rare excitement  
stirs your spirit and your body.  
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,  
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them  
unless you bring them along inside your soul,  
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.**

**Hope your road is a long one.'**

**[...]**

**'Keep Ithaka always in your mind.  
Arriving there is what you're destined for.  
But don't hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it lasts for years,  
so you're old by the time you reach the island,  
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.**

**Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.  
Without her you wouldn't have set out.  
She has nothing left to give you now.**

**And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.  
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.'**

Cavafy (1975), translated by Keely & Sherard (1992)

During unprecedented times like the ones we currently all experience, **we value the process of collaboration and experiences we gain along the way, more than ever before.** We cherish all of our collaborators dearly; past, present and future ones; more specifically with JALT journal that we have the pleasure in collaborating with on so many different levels, with all of our contributors, members, ambassadors, authors, peer-reviewers and readers. We thank you all for making this collaborative journey a very enriching experience.

*Robert J. Bonk & Margarita Kefalaki & Fotini Diamantidaki*

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