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## Preface to the special issue: International perspectives and interactions in education

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Our special issue presents a plethora of perspectives and innovative practices in education contexts from across the world. Authors from Canada, the U.S., South America, Europe and China, argue their case on advancements in educational settings and discuss the value of knowledge. Articles published in this issue include papers presented at the International Conference on Education (EDU2019), organized by the Communication Institute of Greece, 13-16/5/2019, in Athens, Greece.

Following a rigorous peer-review process, we start with an article from a joint effort between Canada and Brazil on the definition of knowledge; what is ideal knowledge, should we strive for it, should we aim for harmonization in society and what constitutes our '*Complete Personal Encyclopaedia*'? Why as human beings do we need to be acknowledged for what we know it to be meaningful and is this an important component of our society? The article argues that different types of knowledge and therefore education are, or should be, welcomed in society. They all serve a purpose, because they are all useful and they are all meaningful in their own way. There isn't such a thing as perfect knowledge but collaboration and a less didactic and transmissive model in education could foster the development of a more comprehensive knowledge. Richard Gagnon, Bruno Santos Ferreira, Gilberto Lacerda dos Santos are the authors of this article, entitled 'Towards complete knowledge for complex problems resolution'.

We then travel to the U.S., where Masaki Mori discusses the issues of four Asian language programmes, including Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese ones. Based on the local context and provision, the paper discusses what the issues are in the University of Georgia and what would make the provision better. This article seeks to present recommendations to improve the courses. It searches for the best way to apply the 'knowledge' and for that we need to set things into motion via a plethora of means. In the context of this proposal, finding qualified teachers, developing exchanges and making better use of funding structures

are the tools needed to develop expertise and that more comprehensive knowledge discussed in the previous article is pertinently applied here.

The third article of this issue, entitled 'Developing reading in modern foreign languages: case studies from the classroom', by Fotini Diamantidaki, is contextualised in London, UK, and discusses how different types of knowledge: semantic, syntactic and graphophonic knowledge – or lack of those functioning simultaneously – contribute or not to the developing of reading in the foreign language classroom. Fotini Diamantidaki argues that a more innovative approach to reading through literature and through classroom interaction with a specific creative goal that leads the learners beyond the text itself, allows students to engage with the content of the language more intuitively and make language their own. The aim is to prove that not only the teacher holds the knowledge captive, but the learner can bring their own knowledge into the process with the view to go beyond the given and create an artefact of their own. This is possible only when the knowledge is taught and shared.

The fourth article comes from Germany where Alexander Ziegler suggests an innovative approach for curriculum development from the SaaS industry with the aim to drive more curriculum content. It is a technical paper that argues that digital transformation is still ongoing in the area of education and an innovative approach coming from the industry sector, and more specifically from IBM, on how we could possibly consider 'crowdsourcing' as a curriculum development approach. The paper breaks boundaries in our existing knowledge and helps us think differently about curriculum development in education.

Mengyao Zhang, Fei Wang, Xinrong Tao, Zeying Wang and Ning Ma, from China, present "Exploring the relationship between students' interaction in a smart learning environment and various variables through the structural equation model". The authors focus on student interaction and examine which variables affect that in the smart classroom. This is executed

very precisely through the structural equation model and it is applied successfully into measuring the variables that affect positively the interaction in the smart classroom. The article contests the idea of what a 'smart' classroom is, and whether all the variables presented in the article, such as learning data and differentiation in the classroom, are indeed new. What it comes down to eventually is how the teachers make good use of the smart tools provided. An encouraging message proving that human beings do still carry the 'knowledge' and they are the ones who can change it.

The sixth article of this issue comes from the UK, by Li Qing, entitled "Managing rapport in the context of classroom talk: A case study of a London secondary school, UK". It discusses classroom talk in the Mandarin Chinese secondary school classroom. This is a new area of research in the UK, with not much research conducted yet in the mainstream Mandarin classroom. Drawing on the theoretical framework on rapport management, the paper investigates how teacher and students negotiate achievement of their goals and how the rapport is managed in this classroom setting. The article shows that we should always challenge students' thinking skills in the classroom and aim for the more collaborative model rather than a didactic one, the former being more fruitful.

In the final article in this special issue, Fanni Dudok from Hungary, compares education systems in the East-Central European region from the aspect of regulation and

curriculum. This is a large comparative study amongst the education systems of Central and Eastern Europe, more specifically amongst Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland. It looks into whether the systems are similar or unified or whether they have been influenced by domestic changes. The results show that there are many common elements across countries, even though they have progressed in different ways. An example which proves that 'knowledge' can be shared and eventually help harmonize systems.

We would like to thank all of our contributors and peer-reviewers who have very diligently participated during this long process of peer reviewing. Additionally, we would like to thank the Academic Community and administration of the Communication Institute of Greece for making it possible for academics from different countries and cultures to meet, exchange and communicate. Our collaboration with Kaplan Singapore and the Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching (JALT) is an example of how many great things we can achieve via this international endeavor. It has been an honour to collaborate with so many talented colleagues from all over the world and we hope that you will enjoy this special issue on International Education and keep thinking what connects us, defines us and challenges us. This is how we can hope and create a better world full of knowledge of the restless human spirit. Thank you to everyone for joining us on this journey.

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