The Linguistic Deception of the Phrase Best Practices: A Critical Analysis of Articles Discussing "Best" Practices in Online Learning

David Johnson
Kennesaw State University
djohnson@kennesaw.edu

Jennifer Cox
Kennesaw State University
jenniferlcox5@outlook.com

Abstract

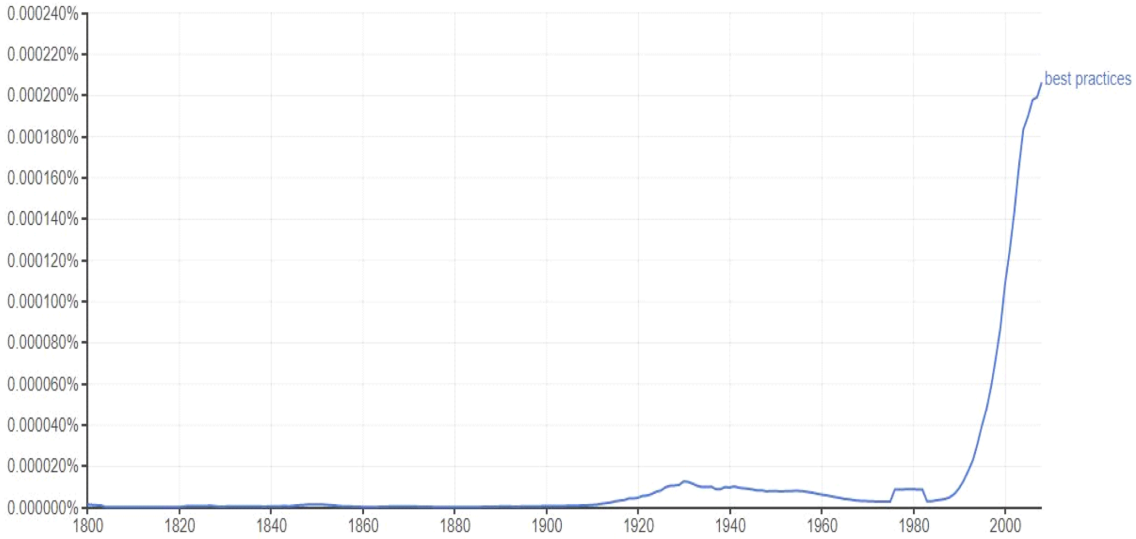
This article examines the use of the phrase *best practices* in academic literature that discusses online learning. Results of our study indicate that, despite the ubiquity of this phrase in academic literature concerning online pedagogy, the majority of articles lack empirical support for promoting certain approaches as *best practices*. Faculty and administrators would be well advised to critically examine articles that purport to promulgate *best practices* in online learning.

Introduction

University administrators and faculty members look to the academic literature for insight into online teaching practices that promote effective learning. Academic journals and articles devoted to online pedagogy are rightly viewed as valuable resources for faculty as they plan courses and for administrators as they evaluate instructor and program effectiveness within the realm of online learning. However, in recent years, we (the authors) have become increasingly cognizant of the prevalence of the phrase *best practices* in academia in general and in connection with online learning in particular. Like all linguists, we are fascinated by how new phrases seem to spring into common parlance as if they have a life of their own, and *best practices* is a perfect example of a phrase that has not only grown exponentially but also shifted semantically.

Consider *Figure 1* below. This is data from Google N-Grams, which can be used to track the usage of words or phrases in English-language books. The x-axis is the year. The y-axis shows the percentage of the phrase in relation to all other words. In numerical terms, there has been a 769% increase in the use of *best practices* in American books from 1990 to 2008. There has been an 823% increase in the use of *best practices* in books published in the UK during the same time period. The year 2008 is the last year available in Google N-Grams, but we present evidence that this phrase shows no sign of abatement.

Figure 1 uses of *best practices* in American books



The phrase *best practices* has its origins in the 1970s. It grew out of "manufacturing's interest in and implementation of benchmarking" (Druery, McCormack, & Murphy, 2013, p. 111). Manufacturing companies were interested in establishing how and why some competitors were more successful in certain areas. But as *Figure 1* shows, the use of the phrase was adopted outside of manufacturing and ultimately expanded in the language beginning in the 1980. Today, it is extremely common in academia.

When explaining how lexical expansion and innovation happen, linguists and lexicographers often use the analogy of clothing fashion. In the 1980s, three-piece suits were considered standard business dress and the use of men's vests increased. Why vests became standard and ubiquitous is hard to explain. Like lexical innovations, it is difficult to pinpoint the origin of (or predict new) fashion innovations. New lexical items, like fashion trends, are neither good nor bad. Lexicographers track innovations and semantic shifts, but they generally do so from an objective position. That is to say, lexicographers do not judge innovations. Rather they merely decide when a new word or new usage has reached a critical mass among language users, thus meriting inclusion in a dictionary.

Ordinarily, linguists and lexicographers sit on the sideline and simply observe and study lexical and semantic change. For example, there was a time when *disrespect* as a verb was verboten in academic writing. However, about ten years ago, linguists and lexicographers, supported by linguistic research, concluded that a critical mass of usage had been reached and that *to disrespect* was acceptable in standard discourse. This, like the changing fashionability of vests, was neither good nor bad, simply a language change.

But on occasion, linguists do jump into the fray and comment on the social, political, and academic implications of lexical change. Such commentary is fraught with difficulties because linguists pride themselves on their scientific objectivity regarding language change. So, it is with trepidation that we wander into the realm of valorization of the increasingly common phrase *best practices*. We do not comment on the moral implications because, frankly, there are none. However, we do comment and present data to argue that despite the "trending" of this term, it remains pedagogically vacuous and misleading, particularly in research centered on online teaching.

Our conclusion is straightforward: authors of articles are using the phrase *best practices* to describe online teaching pedagogy, but the phrase is devoid of any real significance. We contend that the phrase is being used instinctively precisely because it is so trendy. Unfortunately, the phrase is severely misleading. It implies a definitive conclusion when none exists. Equally troubling, it implies a reductive mentality to online teaching. Instructors and administrators who promote certain practices as *best* are reducing the teaching enterprise to adhering to a list of activities whose value has not been verified. At best, it is a phrase that has little semantic value, and at worst, it is a misleading phrase, both rhetorically and linguistically. We will support this conclusion by replicating a study (Druery, et al., 2013) that examined this phrase in the field of library science. We will also add to the previous study's methodology by applying a linguistic methodology—corpus linguistics—as we examine articles in the field of online learning.

We are not the first authors to voice reservations about the phrase *best practices*. MacDonald (2011) called for a cessation of the phrase in an article aptly entitled "Time to End Use of the 'World's Best Practice' Saying." In a blogpost ("The Sham of 'Best Practices'"), Cuban (2010) noted how the disciplines of medicine and education, which pride themselves on research studies, have given in to this term, usurped its meaning, and caused it "to drift

away linguistically from its original meaning of *effective* practices in accomplishing goals to mean faddish or trendy activities" (para. 2) (emphasis added). Osborne, Caruso, and Wolfensberger (2014) noted that the phrase is rarely defined and that "this usage should be more judicious, if not curtailed all together" (p. 213). Cato (2001) acknowledged the troublesome nature of the phrase in that it seemingly implies a consensus of virtually all experts in the field. Cato went on to suggest that the phrase is ultimately "trendy…a great marketing one that promises only the good and wonderful" (p. 3).

While these previous writers have commented on this phrase, to our knowledge no one has commented on this phrase specifically in the field of online teaching. We are also unaware of any examination of this term using corpus linguistics as a research methodology.

Anecdotal Evidence

Before presenting our data, we offer the following anecdotal evidence to clarify our objections to this phrase. One of the authors recently attended a departmental faculty meeting convened to discuss curricular revisions in a university department. During the meeting, an administrator cautioned faculty members to use *best practices* when revising the curriculum. Two observations are in order. First, why would an administrator use this phrase at all? Faculty members would not knowingly and willfully decide to use *inferior practices*. Second, and more germane to the main linguistic thesis of this article, the use of the superlative adjective indicates a belief that a few specified ***best*** practices exist and have been identified. But we do not believe this to be the case. Certainly, any administrator would acknowledge a variety of useful approaches to curricular revision and each approach might be equally valid given different contexts. In the history of curricular revisions, surely more than one set of methods yielded positive results. The use of the phrase reveals both an acquiescence to a trending term and an intriguing rhetorical appeal. Those who use the phrase do so because it is trending. And those who use it seemingly do so to deter objections. After all, once certain practices have been deemed *best*, can there be any disagreement?

We also offer one additional bit of anecdotal evidence. In one of the author's email archives, the phrase's popularity grew exponentially. In *Chart 1*, the tokens of this phrase are shown. The tokens are taken from a search of email announcements concerning university policies and other typical university announcements of interest to faculty members.

Chart 1 Use of the phrase *best practices* in author's received email.

Year	Tokens
2015	1
2016	8
2017	47
2018	107
2019	228

Here are samples of the kind of emails:

- Letter from University System of Georgia Chancellor to Betsy DeVos (cc'd to all University System of Georgia faculty) regarding sexual misconduct complaints

  > *The USG is committed to implementing **best practices** for the overall safety and well-being of our students and wider campus community, and support aspects of the Department's proposed regulations*.

- Minutes from English Department Meeting

  > (The) *leadership team members will collaboratively draft a **best practices** document*.

- Invitation to AAUP Meeting

  > *The AAUP@KSU will hold an early semester business meeting in an effort to develop strategies to ensure the KSU Presidential Search follows **best practices** of transparency and shared governance*.

- Kennesaw State's Distance Learning Center

> *Distance learning pedagogy remains a developing discipline…Courses necessarily include experimentation and a fundamental reconsideration of **best practices**, both individually and throughout the department.*

- *Message from Quality Matters*

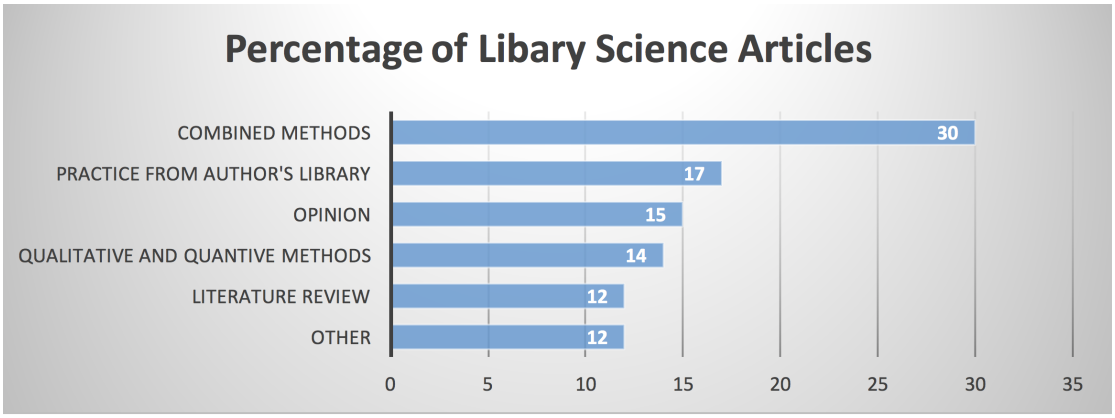
> *We need your ideas, experiences and **best practices** to help others open the Gateway to Quality. Present at the 2018 QM Connect Conference in St. Louis, Missouri!*

These observations and the anecdotal evidence about the phrase led us to conduct the study below. Before presenting our study, we would like to respond to one potential critique, namely that the phrase is intended by its users as being synonymous with *effective*, *good* or *sound* practices. However, the data we present refute this, and we are left with the conclusion that the phrase is indeed intended to be a superlative as is implied by *best*.

Methods

We chose to replicate a study conducted by Druery et al. (2013), which examined how *best practices* is used in research articles that examine practices in library and information science. This is the only study to our knowledge that has systematically examined this phrase. In their study, Druery et al. (2013) collected 113 articles that contained the phrase *best practices* in the title. They examined how these articles "defined the term and how one can reliably identify a *best practice*." What these authors found was intriguing. In the articles they collected, 17% claimed the practices in the authors' own library were *best* because these were the practices used in their own library, a rather circular and curious argument. An additional 15% claimed *best practices* based on the opinion of the author(s) of the article. And 12% of the articles used this phrase based on their assessment of previous literature. It should be noted that Druery et al. (2013) observed that only one of their examined articles based the use of the phrase on previous articles that used scientific methods. The rest claimed best practices because someone else (with no empirical evidence) had stated so. Drury et al. (2013) did categorize 14% of the articles as having used a qualitative or quantitative method to determine *best practices*, but this was a minority of the articles. Druery et al.'s (2013) conclusion was enlightening and compelling: "Library and information science literature on 'best practices' is rarely based on rigorous empirical methods of research and therefore is generally unreliable" (p. 11, 2013). *Figure 2* gives a summary of their results.

Figure 2 Results of Druery, McCormack, and Murphy (2013) Library Science Articles and *Best Practices*



In our replication of this study, we used articles that profess to offer *best practices* in online pedagogy. We used electronic databases to search for articles with the phrase. We initially retrieved thousands of articles when we searched general databases. We decided to narrow the scope to educational databases: ERIC at ESBSO host and ProQuest Education database. Searching for "online learning" in the title and "best practices" in the text, we retrieved 35 results. While the original number was much higher, we eliminated articles that simply had used the phrase without ever identifying the practices. In these articles, the authors discuss all sorts of issues in online teaching but do not discuss practices despite using this term. It appears that authors consider using this phrase a *sine qua non* to publish an article on online teaching.

We extended the analysis by using corpus linguistics, an approach that Druery et al. (2013) did not use. A corpus linguistics analysis allows a search for collocates (terms that have a tendency to appear near the phrase in question) within the articles. We also examined the actual activities mentioned in the articles and comment on these as well.

We classified each article using the same classifications that Druery et al. (2013) used. Each article was read and then put into the following categories based on how the authors had determined *best practices* in online learning.

The categories are the following:

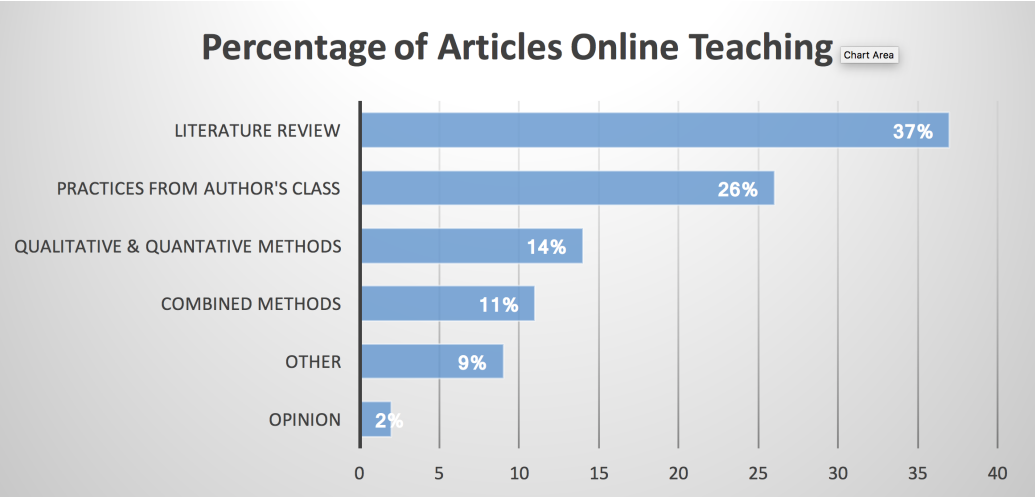
- literature review
- practices from author's own class
- qualitative and/or quantitative methods
- combined methods
- other categories
- opinion

We used the software AntConc to build a corpus of these articles, allowing us to perform a collocate search for adjectives and verbs associated with *best practices* in the articles. We then compared these collocate results with collocate searches using the BYU suite of corpus linguistics.

Results

An analysis of the articles revealed remarkably similar results to those of Druery et al. (2013). Authors who discuss online learning routinely use the phrase *best practices*, but they rarely define the term. In fact, only one author in our list of articles defines the term. Nor do the authors routinely quantify nor qualify how they determine *best practices*. Practices are routinely labeled as "best" based on the authors' own opinion, their own practices, anecdotal support, or a cursory literature review. *Figure 3* gives the percentages in each category.

Figure 3 Results of *Best Practices* in Articles Discussing Online Teaching



The combined methods category includes those articles that use a combination of support to justify the use of the phrase. However, none of the articles in this category use qualitative or quantitative methods. Articles in the "other" category contains critiques of putatively *best practices* that the authors feel are not best, but the authors offer no support as to why. Of particular interest is that in both studies, only a small percentage of the articles rely on quantitative and qualitative empirical methods for their conclusions: 14% in our study and 16% in Druery et al. (2013).

While it is true that 37% of the articles in our list base their use of the phrase on previous articles, which could in turn have used some empirical method for determining *best practices,* we found that those authors who base their use of *best practices* on previous literature are not in fact basing their use on empirical data from these cited articles. We examined many of these cited articles and none that we examined had empirical support. Naturally examining all articles would be beyond the scope of this study. The task of examining all articles cited in our list of 35 articles (and all the citations in the cited articles) is an endeavor that would have grown exponentially; nonetheless, the end result would be the same: 63% of articles in our list do not justify their use of the phrase. This percentage comes from the categories of literature and the author's own practices.

We now turn to the corpus linguistics analysis. Using AntConc, we created a corpus with 193,663 tokens. This is a relatively small corpus, but it is still useful given the ubiquity of the phrase *best practices* in the corpus. Here is a list of adjectival and verbal collocates:

- compelling
- propose
- valid

- legal
- evolve
- foundational
- recommend
- generate
- preliminary

These collocates show an interesting juxtaposition. Consider these sentences:

- "We propose these as best practices."
- "We recommend these as best practices."
- "The evolving best practices in online learning…."

The fact that the authors use these sorts of adjectives and verbs reveals a certain apprehension. If one is *proposing* or *recommending* best practices, how can they be considered best? *Evolving* suggests a degree of malleability, which would negate the use of the term. And returning to our anecdotal evidence, the university emails reveals the same sort of tentativeness:

- "will *draft* a best practice document"
- "best practices *suggest*"
- "a *reconsideration* of best practices"

We also used the BYU linguistic corpus to analyze the phrase. The BYU linguistic corpus is a leading corpus that has multiple corpora. We decided to use the iWeb corpus for two reasons. It is the largest and is also the most up to date. A collocate research revealed the following:

Top verb collocates:

- *share*
- *learn*
- *follow*
- *implement*
- *identify*

Top adjective collocates:

- *current*
- *latest*
- *proven*
- *emerging*
- *evidence-based*

The verb collocates show more possibility for justifying the phrase; however, the adjectives *current*, *latest*, and *emerging* show the same lack of conviction, which ultimately calls into question the use of the term.

This leads to a question. Why are researchers in library science and online teaching using this term? We address this question below.

Discussion

Online education is still a relatively new pedagogical venue. As such, one of our goals in this project was to examine practices that we might incorporate into our own teaching. Online pedagogy is of great interest to us and we wanted to examine approaches and ideas that could improve our online courses. However, we were struck first by the pervasive use of *best practices* in many articles. We were equally surprised to find that the list below constitutes the majority of practices that are declared *best*.

There were six activities that authors consistently mention in their articles as *best practices*:

- Instructors should communicate often with students.
- Instructors should respond quickly to student questions.
- Instructors should grade and return assignments/tests quickly.
- Instructors should maintain a strong "presence" in the virtual classroom.
- Instructors should have group discussions/activities.

- Instructors should keep recorded lectures short.

Certainly, these are valid teaching practices. However, using the word *best* implies practices that would definitively improve the online experience for students. But the first five practices are hardly revelatory nor do they necessarily need empirical support. They are sound teaching principles that good instructors have used well before the advent of online teaching.

Number six in this list bears further examination. The recommendation for recorded lectures is to keep lectures under ten minutes. The justification is that university students stop listening to a lecture after ten minutes. We find this rationale suspect. University students might indeed stop listening after ten minutes. It is easy enough to verify the average length of time students listen to lectures. However, does this justify labeling short lectures as *best practices*? Students do not always finish assigned reading. Does it follow that instructors should reduce reading assignments and that we should label truncated readings as *best practices*? But even more to the point, no empirical evidence was offered that shows short lectures are *best*. Such evidence could include better test scores or evidence of better long-term retention of the material as a result of short lectures. But no such empirical evidence is offered.

So, why the ubiquity of the term? Based on the lack of specific practices, we contend that *best practices* is a sort of rhetorical signaling device. In his recent book *The Case against Education: Why the Education System Is a Waste of Time and Money*, Bryan Kaplan (2018) notes that much of higher education is built on signaling. While we are not in complete agreement with Kaplan's analysis of higher education, we find his definition of signaling useful in explaining the promiscuous use of *best practices*. The phrase signals group identity, an insider's perspective. It promises, as we've seen before, "only the good and wonderful." But teaching is highly contextualized, even in the online venue. General principles may be identified, but *best practices* are difficult to identify. Using the phrase may mask this, but ultimately *best practices*, despite its appeal, is an empty promise.

Conclusion

We were curious to examine how this phrase has grown and how it has shifted semantically and rhetorically using the field of online teaching as a specific domain to examine this lexical item. Our results mirror those of Druery et al. (2013). Perhaps this reveals that teaching by its very nature cannot always be reduced to quantitative assessment but must remain bound to the local context, even in online teaching. One of the authors has written previously that online teachers must not fade into the pedagogical background (Johnson, 2019). The over reliance on this phrase reveals this "fading" might be at work. Teachers must rely less on unvalidated *best practices* and seek to incorporate their own teaching approaches.

In one sense, our criticism of the phrase in articles dealing with online learning may be out of place given the widespread use of the term. It is only natural that English language users employ this term given its recent and dramatic diffusion. Since its inception in the field of manufacturing in the 1970s, the phrase has spread to many if not most fields. It is now used in virtually every field, including medicine, gardening, policing, computer security, and coaching. If our results are indicative of anything, it is that the term is a linguistic example of language change and spread.

What we do suggest is perhaps an alternative word: *strategies* or *principles*. This may help reduce the belief that teachers are trained which might indeed rely on *best practices*. We contend that teachers are developed and not trained. Development requires a critical eye towards suggestions and a fundamental consideration of the local contexts. As Barbour (2010) notes, "Something a course developer may have found to be quite effective, a student may have found useless; in the same way something a teacher may have thought was an effective pedagogical strategy, a student may have found quite boring" (Barbour 2010). There is something in the statement of 'we should use best practices' like it is self-evident. But teaching is not always a self-evident endeavor.

Article References

Barbour, M. K. (2010). Researching K-12 online learning: What do we know and what should we examine? *Distance Learning*, *2*, 6-12.

Cato, P. (2001, February). Best practices – what does that imply? *Excerpt from the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections Newsletter.* Retrieved from https://spnhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/cato_BP.pdf

Cuban, L. (2010, February 3). The Sham of "Best Practices." [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://larrycuban.wordpress.com/2010/02/03/the-sham-of-best-practices/

Druery, J., McCormack, N., & Murphy, S. (2013). Are best practices really best? A Review of the best practices literature in library and information studies. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 4,* 110-128. doi:10.18438/B8RC9S

Johnson, D. (2019). Easy Preparation for Online Courses: Why Professors as Educators Should be Anxious About Becoming Non-Essential. *Change*: *The Magazine of Higher Learning*. 51 (1), 7-13.

Kaplan, B. (2018). The case against education: Why the education system is a waste of time and money. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

MacDonald, R. (2011, May 31). Time to end use of 'world's best practice' saying. *The Courier Mail*. Retrieved https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/calling-it-world-best-means-nothing/news-story/cee8d12481a753abf8e15d573c437cdb?sv=a1d58d3a8d4bb4993dcc96d48d73487c

Michel, J.*, Shen, Y., Aiden, A., Veres, A., Gray, M., Brockman, W. *The Google Books Team*, Pickett, J., Hoiberg, D., Clancy, D., Norvig, P., Orwant, J., Pinker, S., Nowak, M., & Aiden, E*. (2011, January 14). Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books. *Science,* 176-182. (Published online ahead of print: 12/16/2010). DOI: 10.1126/science.1199644

Osborne, J., Caruso, G., & Wolfensberger, W. (2014). The concept of "best practice": A brief overview of its meanings, scope, usage, and shortcomings. *International Journal of Disability Development and Education 58,* 213-222. DOI: 10.1080/1034912X.2011.598387

Articles Used in Study

Abel, R. (2005). Implementing best practices in online learning. *EDUCAUSE Review,* 2, 75-77.

Asunka, S. (2011). Collaborative online learning in non-formal education settings in the developing world: A best practice framework. *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology*, 2(4), 43-57.

Barbour, M. K. (2010). Researching K-12 online learning: What do we know and what should we examine? *Distance Learning*, 2, 6-12.

Brewer, P. E., & Brewer, E. C. (2015). Pedagogical perspectives for the online education skeptic. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 26(1), 29-52.

Cerniglia, E. G. (2011). Modeling best practice through online learning: Building relationships. *YC Young Children*, 66(3), 54-59.

Cifuentes, L., Janney, A., Guerra, L., & Weir, J. (2016). A working model for complying with accessibility guidelines for online learning. *TechTrends*, 60(6), 557–564.

Conley, Q., Lutz, H. S., & Padgitt, A. J. (2017). Creating participatory online learning environments: A social learning approach revisited. *Journal of Interactive Learning Research,* 28(1), 5-27.

Delen, E. & Liew, J. (2016). The use of interactive environments to promote self-regulation in online learning: A literature review. *European Journal of Contemporary Education,* 15(1), 24-33.

DiPietro, M., Ferdig, R. E., Black, E.W., & Preston, M. (2010). Best practices in teaching K-12 online: Lessons learned from Michigan Virtual School teachers. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning,* 7(1), 10-35.

Ekblaw, R. (2016). Effective use of group projects in online learning. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research,* 9(3), 121-127.

Grandzol, J. R. & Grandzol, C. J. (2006). Best practices for online business education. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning,* 7(1), 1-18.

Grant, M. R. & Thornton, H. R. (2007). Best practices in undergraduate adult-centered online learning: Mechanisms for course design and delivery. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching,* 3(4), 346-356.

Green, E. R., Hamarman, A. M., & McKee, R. W. (2015). Online sexuality education pedagogy: Translating five in-person teaching methods to online learning environments. *Sex Education,* 15(1), 19-30.

Haynes, A. S. (2018). Identifying and removing barriers: How campus partners cultivate diverse online learning environments. *Library Technology Reports,* 54(4), 32-35.

Hess, A. N. (2013). The MAGIC of web tutorials: How one library (re)focused its delivery of online learning objects on users. *Journal of Library & Information Services in Distance Learning*, 7(4), 331-348.

Lennon, S. M. (2010). Using online learning platforms to enhance students' reflective and critical thinking. *I-manager's Journal of Educational Technology*, 7(2), 8-17.

Lewinson, J. (2005). Asynchronous discussion forums in the changing landscape of the online learning environment. *Campus-Wide Information Systems,* 22(3), 162-167.

Lim, C. P., Hung, D., Wong, P., & Hu, C. (2004). The pedagogical design of ICT integration in online learning: A case study. *International Journal of Instructional Media,* 31(1), 37-46.

Lion, R. & Stark, G. (2010). A glance at institutional support for faculty teaching in an online learning environment. *EDUCAUSE Quarterly,* 33.

Maddix, M. A. (2012). Generating and facilitating effective online learning through discussion. *Christian Education Journal*, 9(2), 372-385.

Maddix, M. A. (2013). Developing online learning communities. *Christian Education Journal,* 10(1), 139-148.

McNulty, R. (2013). Old flames and new beacons: The luminosity of online learning. *Techniques: Connecting Education & Careers,* 88(1), 40-43.

Merrill, H. S. (2003). Best practices for online facilitation. *Adult Learning,* 13-16.

Michel, J.*, Shen, Y., Aiden, A., Veres, A., Gray, M., Brockman, W. *The Google Books Team*, Pickett, J., Hoiberg, D., Clancy, D., Norvig, P., Orwant, J., Pinker, S., Nowak, M., & Aiden, E*. (2010) Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books. *Science* (Published online ahead of print: 12/16/2010).

Moorefield-Lang, H., Copeland, C. A., & Haynes, A. (2016). Accessing abilities: Creating innovative accessible online learning environments and putting quality into practice. *Education for Information*, 32, 27-33.

Morris, L. V. & Finnegan, C. L. (2008). Best practices in predicting and encouraging student persistence and achievement online. *Journal of College Student Retention,* 10(1), 55-64.

Myers, T., Blackman, A., Andersen, T., Hay, R., Lee, I., & Gray, H. (2014). Cultivating ICT students' interpersonal soft skills in online learning environments using traditional active learning techniques. *Journal of Learning Design,* 7(3), 38-53.

Nash, S. S. (2005). Learning objects, learning object repositories, and learning theory: Preliminary best practices for online courses. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Knowledge and Learning Objects,* 1, 217-228.

Olesen-Tracey, K. (2010). Leading online learning initiatives in adult education. *Journal of Adult Education*, 39(2), 36-39.

Ringler, I., Schubert, C., Deem, J., Flores, J., Friestad-Tate, J., & Lockwood, R. (2015). Improving the asynchronous online learning environment using discussion boards. *I-manager's Journal of Educational Technology,* 12(1), 15-27.

Rizopoulos, L. A. & McCarthy P. (2009). Using online threaded discussions: Best practices for the digital learner. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 37(4), 373-383.

Roy, J. & Sykes, D. (2017). A review of internship opportunities in online learning: Building a new conceptual framework for a self-regulated internship in hospitality. *International Journal of E-Learning & Distance Education,* 32(1), 1-17.

Sunal, D. W., Sunal, C. S., Odell, M. R., & Sundberg, C. A. (2003). Research-supported best practices for developing online learning. *The Journal of Interactive Online Learning,* 2(1), 1-40.

Thomson, D. L. (2010). Beyond the classroom walls: Teachers' and students' perspectives on how online learning can meet the needs of gifted students. *Journal of Advanced Academics,* 21(4), 662-712.

Wake, D. & Bunn, G. (2015). Online learning for the left-behind generation. *SRATE Journal,* 24(2), 40-50.

Wandler, J. B. & Imbriale, W. J. (2017). Promoting undergraduate student self-regulation in online learning environments. *Online Learning*, 21(2), 1-16.
