Editorial for EJEL Volume 18 Issue 2

Dear readers of the EJEL,

Just in time for the summer break of most readers we have been able to complete the second issue of the EJEL for the year 2020. Due to the currently ongoing COVID epidemic, the importance of e-learning has gained special significance. In only short periods of time, e-learning solutions had and still have to be implemented where conventional classroom teaching was the accepted standard just months ago. Educational institutions unintentionally have become real laboratories of e-learning. Although e-learning benefits unintentionally from the current situation, it is to be hoped that this reason for the advancement of e-learning will disappear as soon as possible.

Combining seven articles, this issue again looks – led by the notion of blended learning – at different aspects of e-learning and thus illustrates the complexity that everyone, who is developing or implementing e-learning solutions, has to tackle.

The first article by Johannes Cronje from Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa, prepares the ground for a new definition of blended learning. In "Towards a new definition of blended learning", he argues that current definitions of blended learning are not based on theory and do not consider the notion of learning. Instead, he suggests building a definition on learning theory, thus blending direct instruction and learning by doing. The definition presented combines context, theory, methodology, and technology.

Thereafter, Josemaria Elizondo-Garcia and Katherina Gallardo from the School of Humanities and Education (Tecnologico de Monterrey, Monterrey, Mexico) investigate learner-learner interaction in xMOOCs. Their article "Peer Feedback in Learner-learner Interaction Practices. Mixed Study on an xMOOC on Energy Saving" provides evidence that students are willing to participate in peer feedback activities and that peer feedback is a advantageous means of providing feedback compared to discussion forums, despite of the great diversity of students. Although inherent and external factors of providing feedback are identified, the authors conclude that more research is required to improve the beneficial effects of peer feedback.

Further, Ammar J. M. Karkar, Hayder K. Fatlawi, and Ahmed A. Al-Jobouri from the University of Kufa, Najaf, Iraq present a case study of their university in the article entitled "Highlighting E-learning Adoption Challenges using data Analysis Techniques: University of Kufa as a Case Study". From the perspective of a developing country, the authors state that adoption of technology for learning seems to be dependent on the regional and national context. The University of Kufa has introduced the learning management system Moodle in 2013. Based on a survey among the university's educators, having the impressive number of 242 participants, factors hindering the adoption of e-learning are identified. One remarkable factor identified is the perception among educators that social media might be used more conveniently than learning management systems. Finally, a guideline facilitating the introduction of e-learning and aimed at policymakers is given.

The fourth article in this issue is authored by Rachael Njeri Kibuku, Daniel Orwa Ochieng, and Agnes Nduku Wausi, representing KCA University and University of Nairobi, both located in Nairobi, Kenya. Their article titled "eLearning Challenges Faced by Universities in Kenya: A Literature Review" tackles a similar problem to that described in the previous article: implementation of e-learning faces many challenges. Based on a scoping literature review, the challenges especially prevalent at Kenyan universities are identified. Thus, a roadmap for successful implementation of e-learning in Kenya – and probably further countries characterized by a similar structure– is delivered.

Blended learning again, this time from the perspective of the practical implementation, is focused on in the next article provided by Dina Adinda and Najoua Mohib from the University of Strasbourg, France. Their article, named "Teaching and Instructional Design Approaches to Enhance Students' Self-Directed Learning in Blended Learning Environments" investigates, based on a mixed method study, blended learning scenarios of 18 lecturers. Among the findings is that self-directed learning is only being supported by few of the learning scenarios investigated. The support of interaction and collaboration in blended learning environments is seen as a further research need.

Thereafter, Colleen Carraher Wolverton, Brandi N. Guidry Hollier, and Patricia A. Lanier from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, United States examine the impacts of computer self-efficacy. Their article "The Impact of Computer Self Efficacy on Student Engagement and Group Satisfaction in Online Business Courses" describes findings based on a survey among students. Among their findings is computer self-efficacy having positive effects on engagement and group satisfaction, although the latter is based on group expectations as mediator variable, thus in summary advocating technical literacy as a key skill for e-learning.

Finally, a combined team of researchers from Belgian and Dutch universities describe "A Conceptual Model for Effective Quality Management of Online and Blended Learning". Yves Blieck, Chang Zhu, Kim Schildkamp, Katrien Struyven, Bram Pynoo, Cindy L. Poortman, and Koen Depryck present a theoretical foundation of continuous quality improvement (CQI) management for online and blended learning (OBL) scenarios. Thus, the authors provide a method not relying only on quality assurance but also on continuous improvement. By discussing literature-known factors preventing practitioners from achieving coherence between quality assurance and improvement, a conceptual model is developed, which exploits data for decision making driving the CQI management.

Concluding, we hope you will find many interesting insights while reading this issue's articles and we are looking forward to welcoming you again in the next issue of EJEL - hopefully under improved circumstances.

We would also like to refer you to the special edition of the EJEL on topics of e-learning, which have gained special importance due to the COVID pandemic, or which are particularly prominent under the conditions of the pandemic. You are invited to submit articles on these topics by the end of the year.

Journal Editors
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