Editorial for EJEL Volume 18 Issue 4

Dear readers of the EJEL,

This fourth issue of the EJEL for the year 2020 is the second one that is produced during the ongoing global (Covid-19) pandemic. Compared to the time of the previous issue, the world is a much more different place due to the new practices of social distancing, intermittent lockdowns and online work, but also a more hopeful place due to the approval of several different types of Covid-19 vaccine for mass distribution. The area of e-learning keeps growing in significance globally and across all types and levels of education, including formal and informal learning, primary, secondary and tertiary levels, work-based, as well as self-learning. Slowly but surely, the experience of applying e-learning tools and techniques has been transformed into knowledge that can be applied and shared by practitioners around the world, and this journal continues to be one of the important knowledge hubs in the ongoing massification of e-learning practice.

This issue comprises eight articles written by authors from eight different countries, who are all evaluating implementations of various flavours of e-learning across different disciplines (IT, Engineering, ESL, Marketing, Medicine); different educational levels (higher and secondary education); and by using different research methods (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and systematic reviews).

The first article by Didik Dwi Prasetya, Aji Prasetya Wibawa from State University of Malang in Indonesia, and Tsukasa Hirashima and Yusuke Hayashi from Hiroshima University in Japan investigates the implementation of a specific blended learning design based on the use of interactive multimedia books in a higher education institution in Indonesia. The design supports synchronous and asynchronous blended learning environments through the integration of EPUB3 digital book content into a Moodle learning management system. Based on a survey of 155 students from the Faculty of Engineering in the State University of Malang, the authors report on the enthusiastic acceptance of the new learning activities by the students, while recognising that a further investigation is needed to assess the effects of the new learning design upon the students' performance and the quality of their learning.

In the second article, Nour Awni Albelbisi and Farrah Dina Yusop from the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur report on the findings from a systematic review of literature on the nationwide MOOC initiatives in Malaysian higher education (HE). Their findings are based on the information from 25 primary studies researching the staff and students' perspectives on the use of MOOCs hosted by the OpenLearning platform, the official platform for HE in Malaysia which, at the time of the study (2014-2018), was used by more than 600,000 students enrolled on over 5,000 courses. In addition to the positive perceptions of MOOCs as means for life-long learning, the paper also reports on some of the challenges specific to the Malaysian context such as lecturers' self-efficacy, limited Internet access and anxiety in using MOOCs in learning. The authors conclude with some useful recommendations for future implementation of MOOCs in Malaysia.

Third is the article by Gloria Maite Msiza, Khashane Stephen Malatji and Lydia Kgomotso Mphahlele, all from the School of Education at Tshwane University of Technology in Gauteng, South Africa. They employ a qualitative research approach to investigate challenges faced by students and staff from Tshwane South Secondary Schools, related to the implementation of a large-scale e-learning project launched by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE,) with an investment worth R 724 million (equivalent of 36 million GBP) in 2017/2018. This study is particularly important as there are few studies in the current e-learning literature reporting on the e-learning projects which did not fully meet their objectives. Despites students' excitement and their readiness to accept new ways of learning supported by technologies ("and *to be like other learners in private school"),* poor planning, unstable internet connection and insufficient preparation and training of staff and students, have all hampered the successful implementation of e-learning in this case.

In the fourth article, Małgorzata Rataj and Joanna Wójcik from the University of Information Technology and Management (UITM) in Rzeszow, Poland develop a conceptual mode of m-learning adoption based on the existing technology adoption models, such as TAM, TPB and UTAU, and adapted to the specific needs of the student population in their institution (over 5,000 students from Europe, Asia and North America). The results of a survey of 640 students showed the dominance of smartphones compared to other devices used for m-

learning (tablets, laptops); students' readiness to use the m-learning content; but also their reluctance to abandon the use of traditional books (52%). The authors argue that the teachers' attitudes towards m-learning ("convinced that it is worth using") are important for the students' acceptance of the technology.

The fifth article is by Mustapha Almasi and Chang Zhu from Vrije Universiteit in Brussels, Belgium and uses the "community of inquiry" model of blended learning to investigate the effects of cognitive presence and teachers' presence on students' performance in blended learning (BL) courses in two universities in Tanzania (Mzumbe University and Dar Es Salaam University College of Education). The study was based on a parallel mixed method design, comprising a survey of 351 students, which was built on a cognitive presence scale, and a focus group discussion with 12 student volunteers. The findings report on a high level of "cognitive presence" in the specific BL environment and the positive effects of this "cognitive presence" on students' performance. The comparison of qualitative and quantitative findings reveals that students value highly the integration phase of cognitive presence, but that the integration phase was not always achieved, due to too much time spent in searching for the information and not enough time on applying the new learning.

The sixth article is a qualitative study by Hlaviso Motlhaka from the University of Limpopo School of Education in South Africa, exploring the impact of using (Blackboard) collaborative facilities on English First Additional Language course on students' academic writing proficiency, and the attitudes of the students towards the use of this technology. Based on the reflective metacognitive interviews with eight student participants, the study found that the use of Blackboard collaborate features enable peer feedback and the exchange of ideas, increases engagement, and facilitates instructional feedback to improve second language writers' academic writing skills. The findings from the study also suggest that peer scaffolding provided learners with the awareness of the conventions within which they are expected to write, helping them to improve the quality of their academic writing and to increase their confidence as writers.

In the seventh article, José Magano from the Research Centre in Business and Economics at Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, with Marta Alves, Rita Durão, and Carlos Vaz de Carvalho from Instituto Superior de Engenharia do Politécnico do Porto investigate adoption and use of educational technologies by marketing students from the Higher Institute of Business Sciences and Tourism in Northern Portugal. The study was based on the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which informed the design of the online survey of 101 students. The surveys were administered before and after the adoption of the flipped classroom approach which used a variety of educational applications such as video-lectures, animated/video tutorials and self-assessment online quizzes, all available through Moodle. Effort Expectancy was found to have a significant influence on Behavioural Intention after the introduction of the technology, and similarly to the fourth study, social influence (e.g., teachers) had a significant effect on students' attitudes towards the technology.

The final article by Reem Q. Al Fayez from The University of Jordan School for Information Technology in Amman is slightly different in its objectives from the previous studies, as it reports on the evaluation of different healthcare meta-models for managing e-learning materials in medicine and healthcare education, against the standards of the European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME). These standards are complemented with additional technical criteria such as use of XML and RDF languages within ontologies and controlled vocabularies. Ontologies as a means for knowledge representation are used more and more to aid processing of information in the biomedical domain and therefore their inclusion in the e-learning models of the healthcare systems will support professional development of the healthcare practitioners.

The articles in this issue continue to support the aims and objectives of the journal, in contributing to the development of both theory and practice in the field of e-learning and in providing diverse perspectives on e-learning based on different countries, regions, research methodologies, e-learning technologies and e-learning designs. One of the signs of the maturity of the research field is the readiness of the authors to recognise the challenges rather than report only on the benefits of the specific innovation. This was particularly visible in this issue, and we hope that the critical perspective will continue to grow and support the quality research in the e-learning area.

Journal Editors
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