Editorial for EJEL volume 13 Issue 5

Rikke Ørngreen and Karin Levinsen
EJEL Editors

E-Learning is dynamic and ever changing and there is an ongoing need for studies that enhance and improve e-Learning technically and pedagogically. This issue contains 8 papers all relating to the overall scope of doing e-Learning. The articles take different approaches to explore various ways of improving e-Learning from various points of perspectives: the personal and self-regulated learning of the students; ways for teachers to get insight into the students learning and institutional approaches to develop online-competent tutors.

Theodoros Karvounidis writes about the development of the framework: i-SERF (integrated-Self Evaluated and Regulated Framework) and a pilot study which utilizes this framework. The paper is primarily a thorough discussion and presentation of the i-SERF thinking framework, which consist of 2 layers. The first is an inner layer that concerns the educational perspectives, including the dynamic relationships and interactions of three primary forms of knowledge: Content, Pedagogy, and Technology. This inner layer also deals with the infra-structure, i.e. the technologies used to support these forms of knowledge. The second and outer layer focuses on evaluation and self-evaluation, hereunder a so-called self-feeding mechanism. As such the paper writes itself into the tradition of personal and self-regulated learning.

Vázquez-Cano, Meneses and Sánchez-Serrano take their point of departure in the challenge that ongoing changes in ICT demands updated methodological practices and content in Higher Education. They argue that all professionals with a university degree, regardless of the subject area, will have to demonstrate adequate competencies to implement plans and strategies using ICT tools in the socio-technological environment. The presented study explore Multimedia Concept Maps (MCM) and Online Discussion Forums as ICT tools to identify areas of intervention. The data material was produced over three academic years and analyzed using qualitative analysis (word frequencies and social network analysis). The authors conclude that design and implementation of MCMs and online discussion forums can contribute significantly to the development of generic and specific strategies in the European Higher Education Area such as: self-regulated learning, communicative, instrumental and interpersonal competencies.

In their paper Hwang, Wong, Lam and Lam provide insights into an empirical study of two different forms of student response systems in class teaching. One is a traditional clicker and the other was using a mobile device. The authors found that students preferred the traditional clickers and discuss how and why the usability of such systems and the student preferences towards a specific system, are both pivotal factors for students learning experience.

Ramachandiran, Jomhari, Thiyagaraja and Maria studies how Virtual Environments including virtual agents may enhance autistic children's learning, when learning about 'how to behave' at specific places or scenarios. They argue that it is necessary to understand the e-learner in order to provide effective learning tools for autistic children, in particular when the focus is not only to develop their knowledge, but also their behaviours. A prototype of a toilet virtual environment with a virtual agent was designed for behavioural learning among autistic children and tested among 41 autistic children and their parents. The study provides insight into the users' needs and preferences when designing learning environments for autistic children.

Stevenson, Hedberg, Highfield and Diao discuss mobile devices and the available apps on these devices, as used in learning processes. They do this through the provision of a state-of-the-art review. Here, a significant part of the recent literature is walked-through and they highlight relevant case studies, exploring the relationship between the technologies in use, and the media and visual literacies at play. The authors argue that educational institutions should focus less on infrastructure-led developments and look towards more learner-led solutions.

In his study, Almpanis explore the development needs of tutors who teach in blended and online environments in Higher Education Institutions in UK and the ways these institutions address these needs and deal with support regarding Technology Enhanced Learning. Using a mixed methods approach the study

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collects data among heads of e-Learning departments in various Higher Education Institutions in UK. The study found that the institutions perceived potential of technology to enhance the learning led to the adoption of a wide range of approaches to staff development in this particular area. However the study also found that successful implementation of Technology Enhanced Learning requires a coordinated institutional approach and a long-term investment.

The paper by Nitchot and Gilbert is an empirical study addressing the question of whether the Web contains pedagogical materials. The paper provides explanation of the competency models and structures and on the basis of this develops a competence-based system for recommending study materials from the web, and compares the results of using the competence-based system COSREW with the use of traditional search engines. The study concludes that the Web is currently not a good resource for a pedagogically informed competence-based system since Web pages predominantly comprise text-based subject matter content with little support for learning competence or capability.

In the last paper of this issue Al-Azawei and Lundqvist take their outset in current reseach that indicates that allthough distance-learning is related to positive core features its efficacy is not consistent across all learners. The study uses Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), one of the most commonly used models to examine factors that can help towards the prediction of user intention to accept technologies, or perceived satisfaction. Here Tam is used and extended to examine perceived satisfaction of an Arabic sample in a purposefully developed online learning course based on the Felder and Silverman Learning Styles Model (FSLSM) in order to reveal the pedagogical implications of learning styles on learner satisfaction. The study found that neither learning styles nor gender diversity had direct influence on the dependent factors. Accordingly, the research suggested that other variables may have to be integrated to enhance the power of the TAM-model.