

Editorial for EJEL Volume 18 Issue 6

Dear readers of the EJEL,

with the end of the year 2020 coming up, things are moving at a rapid pace: we had just introduced you to Volume 18 Issue 5, and Issue 6 follows already. The e-learning topics covered by the articles of this issue again demonstrate the wide range of perspectives to which e-learning is subject. The topics discussed in this issue include community of inquiry, flipped classroom, online cheating, communication, personality traits, mobile learning, digital environments in the classroom and technology acceptance models. Reflecting on these articles, it has become evident to us that all the articles in this issue are inspiring in their own way, so motivation for designing own e-learning activities is the overarching theme of this issue. In the following, we present a summary of these ten articles, so that the interested reader may follow-up by choosing to read the ones that are of most interest to them.

This issue starts with a Norwegian-Greek collaboration: Krystyna Krzyszkowska (UiT The Arctic University of Norway) and Maria Mavrommati (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) investigated to what extent a Community of Inquiry (CoI)-based model may be used to improve the instructional design of an online course in continuing education for Norwegian teachers. Their approach was based on a mixed method comprising a validated CoI questionnaire and interviews. The findings from their study lead to three clear design recommendations, which have gained even more relevance during the COVID pandemic.

The second article by Kerry Adzima from the Pennsylvania State University of Erie (USA) looks at academic dishonesty, and in particular cheating, in a context of higher education. Based on the assumption that e-learning increases or at least enables the opportunities for cheating, a literature review was conducted. The results are grouped in four categories and altogether constitute a meaningful overview of a topic with which everyone who teaches is confronted.

The third article authored by Chaka Chaka, Tlatso Nkhobo and Mirriam Lephala from the University of South Africa (South Africa) delves into the world of instant messaging apps. Using Moya and WhatsApp as well as the online discussion forum myUnisa as examples, the article explores how these communication tools are integrated into formal learning contexts in South Africa. The results show a broad spectrum of uses on the part of both teachers and learners.

Likewise, communication in formal learning contexts is investigated in the seventh article by Tristan Cui (Monash University) and Andrew Coleman (Swinburne University of Technology), based in Melbourne, Australia. Their article examines communication via LMS-enabled text messaging between teachers and learners in an online course for an international audience, which uses flipped classroom approach. The authors surveyed the attitudes, motivations, participation and performance of the students involved in so-called out-of-class communication (OOC) during the course. They have found an increased participation of students in the course who are using text-messages but could not establish a significant relationship between OCC and academic performance. The article concludes with guidelines and suggestions for refining the research design.

The didactic approach of flipped classroom, which benefits often from the capabilities of e-learning, is thematised in the fourth article by Malek Jdaitawi from the Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (Saudi Arabia). The author investigated to what extent the emotions of students in a flipped classroom approach differ from those in a traditional teaching setting. Based on a quasi-experimental study, it was found that the flipped classroom approach led to more positive emotions. It was also noted by the author that the results must be reproduced in the future and, in order to allow a constructive use, the factors of the flipped classroom approach that lead to positive emotions will need to be identified.

The fifth article establishes a link between personality traits and creativity. Yasemin Abedini from the University of Isfahan (Iran) uses validated questionnaires assessing personality traits and creativity and compares the results between online and face-to-face courses. It is found that personality traits may be used for predicting creativity and that students attending online courses exhibit higher creativity scores.

The sixth article explores mobile learning in higher education in the specific context of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Slovakia. Ratislav Mětruk from the University of Žilina (Slovakia) used data from a questionnaire to show that there is a moderate positive attitude towards learning with the help of smartphones. However, various challenges were also highlighted, such as the difficult planning of learning, the low use of smartphone apps and the low degree of support for training of speaking skills.

The eighth article provides an insight into the practice of digitalised school teaching. Charalampos Apostolou, teacher at the 3rd Gymnasium of Kozani (Greece), has collected student feedback over several years in different classes by means of a questionnaire. The aim was to compare different ICT equipment environments available in the classroom: On the one hand was a 1:1 environment, in which each student has his or her own notebook, and on the other hand, a so-called PC-VP environment, which consisted of an Internet-capable PC with attached projector. Interestingly, students rated both approaches as similarly successful. But the teaching approach was highlighted as a more important factor for successful learning. Although the data collection took place several years ago, the article contributes to the discussion about the level of digitalisation in schools.

Decisions about adopting digital learning tools depend on many factors, including the willingness of teachers to use the tools. In the ninth article, Osman Sadeck, Agnes Chigona and Johannes Cronje from the Cape Peninsula of Technology, Cape Town (South Africa) use a theoretical approach in developing a model that describes the acceptance of digital learning tools by teachers. The model is based on technology acceptance models (TAMs), which have been extended by elements of social cognitive models. The resulting model is not meant to be a substitute for all previous models, but rather an instrument for sharpening the perspective on digital learning tools.

The tenth and last article in this issue is, after a long time, another book review. Our highly appreciated and experienced associate editor Ken Currie took the opportunity to take a closer look at the book "Learning Online - The Student Experience" by George Veletsianos, published by John Hopkins University Press. The result is a critical but to-the-point review that is certainly worth reading. With this review, Ken Currie retires from his work for the EJEL. We thank him sincerely for his tireless commitment, his sound assessment and support of articles that have contributed to the success of the EJEL. We will not forget, but will miss, his refreshing, on-target comments that have always brightened up our work.

This was a brief description of the ten articles included in this issue. We hope that these articles inspire you to design your own creative learning activities using digital tools. If you have not yet found adequate inspiration, or if you are already eager for further inspiration, we would like to draw your attention to the upcoming Volume 19 Issue 1, which is the first special issue of the EJEL reporting on the challenges of e-learning in the light of the – unfortunately still continuing – COVID pandemic.

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