Editorial: Implementation and Assessment of Online Learning Tools

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Greetings and welcome to Issue 3, 2022. In this Issue we present articles from or about India, Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Oman and Thailand. We continue the cross cutting themes of Issue 1 and 2 in this Volume, with articles that focus on the implementation and assessment of strategies to facilitate teaching and learning, with greater emphasis on continuity post COVID-19, and developing sustainable solutions for the future of teaching and learning.

Refereed Articles

The articles in this section are drawn from geographic locations including South Africa, Uganda, India and Oman. The focus is on student preferences for technology-enabled learner support, WhatsApp use for teaching and learning, problem-based learning in online education and student engagement in online courses. Evaluating blended learning and assessing learning loss are also among the themes explored in these articles.

Adult student preferences for technology-enabled learner support

In our first article in this section **Johan Marx** discusses which form of technology-enabled academic learner support students would prefer, and assess their readiness for information and communications technology, under normal conditions or amid the pandemic at UNISA, South Africa. The study collected data using an online survey among final year students and while respondents indicated that, under normal, healthy conditions, they would prefer webinars to face-to-face learner support, under COVID-19 conditions, they ranked webinars, online question and answer sessions, vodcasts and lecturer-recorded videos among their preferences. The author suggests the need for administrators to take note of student preferences for implementation post COVID-19.

WhatsApp use among first year students

Continuing the theme of technology enabled learner support in this article **Frank Makoza** analysed the use of WhatsApp among first-year students at the University of Technology, South Africa, drawing on Assemblage Theory. Makoza concludes that first-year students used WhatsApp for communication, sharing content and information related to issues affecting their studies and WhatsApp was useful for orienting first-year students in their new educational environment. The findings offer useful insights for the integration of Mobile Instant Messaging platforms in the context of higher education.

Problem based learning in online education

In this article **Ramkrishna Uttamrao Dikkatwar** and **Saradhi Kumar Gonela,** discuss the use of problem based learning strategy and the case method, among management graduate students. The authors used the focus group discussion technique for an in depth understanding of the experiences of management students from a top tier B-School in India. Their findings which have implications for HE administrators suggest that the students had a disconnect with the online case discussions due to various reasons ranging from technical glitches and snags to case preparation and discussion, to peer-learning and faculty interactions.

Student engagement in online classes

In this article we present a discission on the level of student engagement in online courses at the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Oman during the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors **Atsloom Zabanoot Mohammed, Abdelrahman Mohamed Ahmed Elhaj and Wan Mohamad Fauzy Wan**, explored the challenges that impeded student engagement in online courses, using a mixed methods approach with selected students and instructors. Their findings indicated challenges that impeded student engagement such as, heavy workload, inability to manage their study time, low-level of class participation, and increase of instructor workload. Despite these challenges they report a high level of engagement among the students. The authors suggest that their findings have implications for educators in their planning for better strategies to improve student engagement in online classes

Evaluating blended learning in an MBA Class

In this article **Joseph Kizito Bada** discusses the blended learning approach for course delivery via the Moodle LMS at the Makerere University Business School (MUBS). The study establishes learner views about e-learning and presents a blended learning approach for an online assignment and discussion forum. The author reports evaluation results in which students strongly recommended the e-learning approach for postgraduate studies, while expressing benefits from online classes, including easy provision of lecture materials; ease of coursework administration; user friendly learning environment; cost-effective way of studying; useful interactive discussions; and flexibility in learning. Some challenges are also discussed such as accessible Internet and availability of computer equipment that have implications for the institution, to facilitate an effective e-learning environment.

Learning Loss during the COVID-19 pandemic

In our final article in this section **Varuna Agarwala, Tarak Nath Sahu and Sudarshan Maity** provide some empirical insights into the factors leading to learning loss among students at different educational levels - school, colleges and university. The authors used ordered logistic regression to investigate the factors affecting the success of the online teaching-learning system along key variables of location, ownership of the institution, and gender of the students. Their findings indicate that inadequacy of digital infrastructure and the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of students contributed to high levels of learning loss and the location of the educational institution added to the differences noted in learning progress during the pandemic. The authors conclude on the need for support to remove the digital divide and ensure equitable access to learning platforms at all educational levels.

From the Field

The articles in this section focus on issues affecting teaching and learning in India, Algeria, Thailand, and Nigeria. Authors explore teachers' perspectives on ICT integration and a framework for teachers' digital competency is presented. We also examine new trends and innovations to support students during the pandemic and we close the section with an interesting application of digital storytelling in Thailand.

Teachers' perspectives on ICT integration in Mathematics education

In this article **Areye Kiapene** reports on teachers' perspectives of the drivers and constraints of ICT integration into Mathematics Education in private secondary schools in the Niger Delta region. Using descriptive statistics, the findings suggest that the major drivers of computer integration into

the teaching and learning of mathematics included changes in pedagogical practices, school, and national policy to meet global standards, ease of teachers' jobs, and the need to promote a student-centred approach to learning through the digital classroom. The findings also indicate that there was minimal use of ICT among the teachers due to impediments such as lack of support by school management to access Internet services, lack of an adequate power supply, theft and vandalization, and inadequate training and skills for effective use of ICT. The author recommends teacher training in ICT literacy for development of competency and government creation of an enabling environment that would reduce the cost of access to Internet services.

International frameworks for teachers' digital competences

With the ubiquity of digital technology in K-12 education, digital competency frameworks for teachers have been published over the past several years that range from local initiatives to international standards. In this article **Mourad Benali and Janice Mak** review how teachers' digital competence is envisioned and implemented using existing frameworks. They compared frameworks based on their rationales, goals, and their definition of digital competence for educators. Their findings indicate a large degree of alignment among the frameworks, more so in the standards. The authors aim to make a theoretical contribution to the categorization of teachers' digital competency

New facets of learning during the pandemic in India

In this article, **Ravi Sankar Kummeta, Raj Kumar Guntuka, Shravan Boini,** and **Kaustav Shyamal Mukherjee** discuss the trends that have been adopted in the learning process of higher education in India in response to the pandemic. They report on the online learning initiatives implemented by Central and State Governments, the smart solutions, platforms, and tools used to create digital learning content and video collaboration tools to overcome the learning challenges in higher education during the pandemic.

Student use of WhatsApp as a learning support tool in Nigeria

In this study to examine the extent of student use of WhatsApp as a learning support tool in Nigeria, **Yunusa Dangara Usman,** and **Aishatu Bukar** report that students were familiar with and are using the different WhatsApp features for different purposes, thus making its acceptance and integration as a support tool for learning a seamless process. They conclude that the use of WhatsApp and other social networking platforms by teachers and students should be encouraged in learning institutions. They recommend greater use of the WhatsApp functionalities along with the availability of more affordable mobile Internet services in Nigeria.

Innovations in online testing of English for Specific Purposes in Algeria

Turning now to an innovation in practice, in this article **Abderrahim Bouderbane** discusses use of a barcode correction system which was used for the first time in a type of assessment which focused on enriching the minimum vocabulary of students in a variety of English for specific contexts. The article focuses on the application of the barcode correction system on different types of ESP exercises, as they were corrected, taught, explained, and consolidated. The author reports on results which indicate a high correlation between mistakes and ESP exercises calculated by the correction of barcode reading.

Digital storytelling training kit

In the final article in this section, we focus on a practical application of storytelling in the field. **Katekeaw Pradit, Anong Phibral and Prachyanun Nilsook** report on the design and development of a mobile-learning training kit for assessing the depression risk of elderly Muslims

in Thailand. The authors compare the achievements before and after the training of village health volunteers using the mobile-learning training kits. Their results indicate statistically significant improvement in skills post training and extremely high user satisfaction with the training kit.

Best wishes for 2023 from the Editorial Team!

We thank all our authors for your patience during the long delays, while our peer review panels, and our journal managers continue to juggle tasks in an environment of changing responsibilities. We look forward to our engagements in 2023 and to continuing our efforts in service to you, our valued stakeholders. Best wishes to you in 2023. Happy New Year!

A reminder to new and continuing authors of our journal guidelines that should be observed when submitting articles for publication. Your attention to the author guidelines at: http://ijedict.dec.uwi.edu/submissions.php#guidelines will enhance our review process and improve the time to completion by our review panels.

Stay safe and continue to be well in 2023.

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