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November – 2017

Editorial



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This last issue of IRRODL for 2017 leads off with three articles on mobile learning, which is becoming increasingly relevant, if not essential, for e-learning in both developed and developing countries. According to the International Telecommunications Union, mobile-broadband subscriptions have grown annually in the last five years to reach approximately 4.3 billion people, out of a world population of 7.6 billion. Moreover, mobile subscription prices have decreased in the past three years by more than 50%, resulting in an increase in the importance and applicability of mobile learning, or M-learning, becoming more and more obvious to educators. The four lead articles drill down from a broad perspective, to a country context, to two specific M-learning implementations. These are followed by four articles relating to different aspects of open learning, including the general meaning of open, faculty perceptions, OER experience, and MOOCs. The next three articles on teacher and medical professional education are concerned with digital tools and interactions. The remaining articles concern a study on content effectiveness and inclusiveness. In the final research notes section, we include my report to UNESCO on OER in support of UNESCO's *Strategic Development Goal 4: Education for All*.

Kroll and **Duart** provide us with an excellent report on the trends in M-learning through a systematic review of articles. The report focuses on the themes, methods, settings, and technologies found in the research on M-learning in higher education. One finding of special importance is the increasing research on the use of a wide variety of different mobile devices. This is significant because commercial educational content comes with digital locks that do not allow for switching from one device to another, or even one application to another. On the other hand, Open Educational Resources (OER) provide teachers and learners with the flexibility to switch devices as needed.

Aluko gives us an African perspective on implementing M-learning using the UNESCO guidelines to construct suitable policies using recognized standards for mobile broadband implementations. Specifically, she uses a qualitative approach with which to examine the relevance of M-learning in the South African context.

This is followed by two articles from Turkey on the use the mobile application *WhatsApp*. **Avki** and **Adiguzel** present a mobile-blended model for collaborative learning using a project-based learning approach, with the aim of providing optimal opportunities for English language learners to engage in speaking English. Their results showed positive increases in oral communications using colloquial English as well as in written messaging. On the other hand, Cetinkaya's study focused on student perceptions and success, concluding that *WhatsApp* is more useful as a supportive technology.

Four papers on openness are introduced by **Rolfe** who starts with an investigation into what “open” means through surveying faculty and staff at one UK university. Their interviews revealed that openness could be associated with pedagogy and practice, learner benefits, accessibility and access, institutional structures, as well as values and culture.

Panda and **Santosh** explore the adoption of openness as a “core value” and as part of the institutional strategy by faculty at the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India (IGNOU) and their attitude towards sharing of resources in academic institutions. Their research suggests that sharing free resources is valued; however, they found that there was a lack of understanding in intellectual property rights, copyright, and OER. They close with a call for more training and for institutional policies supporting OER.

Following this faculty study, students' undergraduate experience with OER is examined by **Afolabi**. The research suggests that a grasp of the learners' skills and competencies is important in designing an OER intervention strategy. They also found that a positive opinion on OER was correlated with higher achievement scores.

Ikahihifo, Spring, Rosecrans, and **Watson** follow with an assessment of the savings for students due to OER implementation at an American community college. In this case, the investigators asked students how they used the money that was saved. They reported that they used the savings to pay off tuition or purchase content in other courses. Others used funds to take additional courses or simply for day-to-day expenses.

The Spanish National University of Distance Education (UNED) is the focus of **Gil-Jaurena, Callejo-Gallego,** and **Agudo's** evaluation of a MOOC implementation. They included demographics noting that the “average” student was a 37-year-old employed female with a university degree. As has been the experience of many MOOC implementations, completion rates were low and this could be correlated with the lack of support, to which students gave a low rating.

Professional education is the subject of the next four articles, beginning with **Luo, Murray,** and **Crompton's** piece on intervention with pre-service teachers. Using an authentic learning framework, their test results suggest that web-based tools and increased comfort levels were beneficial for teachers who designed their own classes.

On the other hand, **Krejns, Vermuelen, Buuren,** and **Acker** research focused on the mediating role of attitude, perceived norm, and perceived behavioural control of perceived success on the behavioural intention of teachers using digital content and applications. They conclude that behavioural intention was related to perceived success, with the implication that teachers need to experience success in using digital learning materials in the early stages, either through their training or in other ways.

The **Forbes** article addresses the ethics of social media use and professional online presence for teacher educators. They suggest that there is a need for differential scaffolding dependent on the learners' comfort with the use of social media. They also provide some practical advice on integrating coursework into online social environments.

Teras and **Tarcoglu** complete the professional development section using authentic e-learning principles in a program for vaccine management. Their findings suggest that learning was facilitated more in a “dynamic web of interactions” rather than by simply covering content, which plays only a supporting role.

Learning interaction in a medical environment is also the focus of **Thomas, Turkay, and Parker's** article concerning student engagement. Focusing on feedback from assessments, they concluded that such immediate feedback could help to mitigate the negative effects of assessment and help reduce the rate of student attrition.

Fanguy, Costley, and Baldwin investigate the effectiveness of the summaries in lecture videos for a flipped class course. While the provision of lecture summaries is shown to significantly improve the performance of students who access them, the introduction of guest lecturers resulted in students losing concentration and missing out on the benefits provided by the summaries.

Inclusiveness issues are addressed by **Lago and Acedo**, who study the inequalities of access for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Their analysis of more than 400 participants suggest a significant relationship between participation in online courses and the following: level of education, knowledge of sign language, and number of members in the household.

This issue, the last of 2017, concludes our offerings for the year. It has been a very successful and productive year for IRRODL and we thank you for your contributions, support, and readership. We wish you all peace, health, and happiness in 2018.

