International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning
IRRODL

THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW
OF RESEARCH IN OPEN AND
DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

Editorial - Volume 18, Issue 6

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Aller au sommaire du numéro

Découvrir la revue

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Editorial

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Back-to-School Reading! Happy September.

We are pleased to bring you the penultimate issue of 2017, a collection of 16 research pieces and one field note that comprises a literature review on MOOCs. Researchers continue to investigate the nature of MOOCs, although we have only two MOOC-research pieces this issue. The first is from **Kahan, Soffer,** and **Nachmias**, who sought to characterize the different types of participant behavior in a MOOC using a data mining methodology with 21,889 participants. The results provide further evidence of the usefulness of MOOC flexibility in meeting participants' needs and supports the claim that MOOCs' impact should not be evaluated solely on certification rates but rather based on learning behaviours.

Fernández-Díaz, Rodríguez-Hoyos, and **Salvado** analysed the pedagogic architecture of MOOCs in Spanish courses over one academic year, focusing on five major dimensions from a qualitative perspective: subjects and the promoting institution, methodology, resources, type of videos, and evaluation. The results demonstrate the hegemony of subjects linked to the Society of Knowledge, such as the widespread use of traditional methodology based on video lessons (the "talking head" model). Communication tools are clearly underused and evaluation based on the use of questionnaires is dominant. The findings show the need for further research into MOOC pedagogy.

This issue tended toward research on design. **Johnson, Hill, Lock, Altowairiki, Ostrowski, dos Santos,** and **Liu** understand the design of online discussions to be a pedagogical means in developing students' intentionality for the adoption of strategies leading to deep learning. Through a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach, iterative design of online learning components for undergraduate field experience courses were studied. For this paper, they examined factors that influenced deep and surface levels of learning in online discussion forums. The results indicate that design factors (i.e., student engagement, group structures, and organization) influence the nature and degree of deep learning and implications are shared.

Al-Azawei, Parslow, and **Lundqvist's** study of 92 undergraduate learners examined effectiveness of a technology-enhanced traditional Web design course on blended e-learning acceptance and learner satisfaction in which Universal Design for Learning UDL) principles (multiple means of representation,

action and expression, and engagement) were applied. The findings suggest that using educational technologies to address curricula limitations served as a bridge to enhancing learner willingness to accept e-learning.

Norberg, **Stöckel**, and **Antti** used two design frameworks together in a small case study in preparatory-level engineering courses in Sweden of examine blended learning design to examine common procrastination problems in flexible education. Data were collected in student interviews and analysed with qualitative content analysis. Results show student satisfaction with the work rhythm and that a feeling of presence, which enables easy interaction, can be facilitated by synchronicity.

Barbera, Garcia, and **Fuertes-Alpiste** present a case study of the co-design process for an online course on Sustainable Development (Degree in Tourism) involving the teacher, two students, and the project researchers. The co-design process was founded on an inquiry-based and technology-enhanced model that takes shape in a set of design principles. The findings revealed the main role of each of the actors involved - the teacher focused on basic instructional design related aspects while students focused on improving the use of resources and learning aids. CompendiumLD software was a helpful tool to graphically represent and share the prototyping of the activities and to help analyse the design process.

Open and distributed learning uses many varieties of tools to achieve its aims. The following five research studies looked at some of those tools. **Altanopoulou** and **Tselios** investigated students' willingness to use wikis and found that the relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness was of the highest magnitude. The results demonstrate that the proposed TAM-extended model could predict students' wiki acceptance.

In a qualitative study, **Woodward, Lloyd,** and **Kimmons** examined the role of student voice in the evaluation of textbook quality. Their analysis revealed that textbooks can be rigorously and meaningfully evaluated by students, that open textbooks can compete with restricted textbooks in terms of quality, and that polyphonic approaches to textbook evaluation can be valuable for learning.

Singh and **de Villiers** used literature and a series of six empirical action research studies to develop an evaluation framework of categories and criteria called SEAT (Selecting and Evaluating e-Assessment Tools to evaluate and validate tools and systems used in e-assessment processes. Their findings will assist academics in making informed choices when selected multiple-choice questions (MCQs) for adoption or for evaluating existing ones.

Thankachan and **Moore's** study investigating the use of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS), a subset of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), analyzed the perception of 43 senior FOSS implementation project officials. It detailed how FOSS was introduced and reports on major challenges and how those challenges were overcome in a secondary educational setting in India. The lack of adequate resources to train the teachers was the single biggest challenge in the adoption of FOSS. The emerging strategies for efficient FOSS implementation could be used in other states in India and in other developing countries.

Leslie and **Camargo-Borges's** paper, as part of a larger body of research, asked how a portfolio approach to teaching and learning can help educators develop unique forms of reflective practice that will help them express their ideas more clearly, first to themselves and then to the educational communities. The research concludes that in consideration of McLuhan's (1964) notion that the "medium is the message," the interactions that arise through the use of new media tools can lead us to relational, co-constructed ideas that are not those simply passed on from other texts. By making our thinking visible, the portfolio approach allows educators to capture the contextual relationship between the author, the audience or community, and the knowledge being created.

Ma, Wang, Wang, Kong, Wu, and **Yang's** study set out to verify a Chinese version of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) instrument and explore the causal relationships of the factors in the instrument. The key findings showed that teaching and social presences directly influenced the perceptions of cognitive presence. Learning presence was a partial mediating variable of interactional relationship within CoI constructs.

The next three papers consider our field in the macro context. Have advancements in technology levelled the playing field? In a qualitative study, using an ontological, epistemological, methodological, and instrumental approach, **Salazar-Márquez** considered the chances of success for digital immigrants in a higher education program.

Yamagata-Lynch, Despande, Do, Garty, Mastrogiovanni, and **Teague** studied net neutrality as a complex sociocultural phenomenon that can affect the work of distance education scholars and online learners. Using the research question "how do the complexities involved in the net neutrality debate in the United States affect public access to online information and services, and what implications does this hold for online learning?" they relied on activity systems as an analytical framework for making sense of net neutrality.

In their paper, **Martínez-Cerdá** and **Torrent-Sellens** sought to test the influence of formal e-learning on estimating employment status, using of a sample of 595 citizens in 2007 and 1,742 citizens in 2011 in Spain. After inferential judgements based on the empirical results, it was shown that one of the most important factors for estimating employability in times of economic crisis involves lifelong e-learning. Moreover, formal e-learning activities can be a strategy for obtaining better job stability.

And turning to science, **Meintzer, Sutherland,** and **Kennepohl** studied the differences in the performance and perceptions of students about their learning in the laboratory (in-person) versus learning at a remote location (remote access). Students' perceptions (n = 46) indicated that they found both experimental scenarios to be at appropriate levels of difficulty, clear to understand, and did not overall prefer one way of completing the experiment over the other. However, they felt that they learned more about the theory of the experiment, more hands-on skills, and more about the operation of the instrument when they performed the experiment in the laboratory in the presence of an instructor.

This issue also features one field note, from **Nortvig** and **Christiansen,** who reviewed the literature to outline the state-of-the-art collaboration between educational institutions on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) launched in Europe and in the US for the past 10 years. It concludes that collaboration

on MOOCs can be advantageous in terms of ensuring quality and innovation in the common learning designs, and that—in order to succeed—such projects need strategic and institutional support from all partners involved. Moreover, the review points out barriers concerning the reluctance of individual institutions to engage in national collaboration due to fear of potential loss of their own national branding and the teachers' hesitancy or passive resistance to new educational platforms and formats.