

Editorial - Volume 24, Issue 3

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August – 2023

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Dietmar Kennepohl

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Welcome to our third issue of the year.

As you know, this year the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has dominated academic discussions around the globe. The editorial team at IRRODL is looking into a policy on generative AI (ChatGPT, Bard, etc.) use. However, in the meantime, authors must reference this as per APA7 guidelines. This does not include spelling and grammar checkers. On a lark, I wanted to know what a large language model might “think” about developing an AI policy. When prompted with “increased discussion around AI this year and how it should be handled for academic journal articles,” ChatGPT responded with:

It's great to hear that there's increased discussion around AI and its handling in academic journal articles. AI has been a rapidly evolving field with significant implications for various disciplines, and addressing its proper handling in scholarly publications is important for maintaining rigor, transparency, and ethical considerations. Developing an AI policy for academic journals involves creating guidelines and principles to address the use of artificial intelligence in scholarly research, publication, and peer review processes. Such a policy should aim to promote transparency, rigor, ethical considerations, and responsible use of AI technologies. (OpenAI, 2023).

Anyways, this issue is bursting with more than our usual number of excellent contributions. We start with **Akbulut, Saykılı, Öztürk**, and **Bozkurt** studying the limitations of relying solely on student perceptions in their paper “What If It’s All an Illusion? To What Extent Can We Rely on Self-Reported Data in Open, Online, and Distance Education Systems?” To achieve more robust conclusions, they suggest other evidence like system and performance data should be considered in addition to just survey data. This research adds significant weight to the IRRODL policy of not accepting submissions describing teaching interventions or surveys on pedagogical approaches that make no reference to student achievement, performance, or retention. See: <https://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/studentachievement>

In the ensuing study, “A Systematic Review of Systematic Reviews on Open Educational Resources: An Analysis of the Legal and Technical Openness,” the awareness of the importance of the technical openness and tools that might contribute to fostering users’ engagement with OER, helping them to reuse, remix, and redistribute these resources according to their needs is raised by **Sousa, Pedro**, and **Santos**.

Our next contribution from **Kristiana, Prihatsanti, Simanjuntak**, and **Widayanti**, entitled

“Online Student Engagement: The Overview of HE in Indonesia,” is a mixed-method study looking at learner engagement components – emotional attachment, participation, performance, and skills. Its effectiveness compared with in-person learning is considered.

While social media for professional learning is more commonly used by schoolteachers, in the next article, **Oddone** explores the real-life experiences of university educators in a series of case studies in “University Educators’ Experience of Personal Learning Networks to Enhance Their Professional Knowledge.”

Maultsaid and **Harrison** in “Can Open Pedagogy Encourage Care? Student Perspectives” provide thoughtful learner insights on this open educational approach that already embodies care as part of its process of co-creation of learning and knowledge.

In the following article, **Heiser** aimed to understand the effects of international research collaboration on three open universities, in “The Emergence of the Open Research University Through International Research Collaboration,” by examining the relationship between national comparative universities through citation metrics between 2000 and 2022.

Through topic modeling analysis of news articles, **Lee, Kim, Sari,** and **Bozkurt** explore the dominant discourses on online distance education that emerged in South Korean society before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic in their paper entitled “Shifting Conversations on Online Distance Education in South Korean Society During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Topic Modeling Analysis of News Articles.”

In this next study, **Janfeshan, Sharhan,** and **Janfeshan** investigate if the use of blended learning (with mobile-assisted language learning) compared to the traditional method in their contribution “Effects of Using WhatsApp: Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners’ Vocabulary Learning and Autonomy.”

The benefits of higher education, including increased earnings, are well known, but what does this look like in the context of alternative learning pathways and access? In their submission “Who Gets the Highest Return to Distance Higher Education?” **Wang** and **Li** examine the differences of return to distance higher education at different income levels.

In the final research article, “OXREF: Open XR for Education Framework,” **Abeywardena** introduces a novel empirical framework that proposes a holistic solution to Extended Reality (XR) object creation, implementation, and deployment employing open educational resources, open educational practices, as well as free and open-source software tools and platforms.

Pulist then provides us with a first-rate book review of *(Open) Educational Resources Around the World: An International Comparison* edited by Marín, Peters, and Zawacki-Richter (EdTechBooks.org, 2022). The book delivers a solid overview of OER developments at different levels around the globe.

Finally, in our *Notes From the Field* section we have three contributions: In “Can Online Short Courses Foster Business Education for Sustainable Development?” **Dhakal** offers some foundational analysis and proposes this e-learning skill-building innovation. Next, **Durand** and **Balhasan**, in “An Example of Using Collaborative Online International Learning for Petroleum and Chemical Engineering Undergraduate Courses,” describe and demonstrate a meaningful international and cross-disciplinary collaboration

experience. Then **Abbad**i and **Alaoui**, in “Distance Mathematics Teaching and Academic Performance in Morocco,” offer an in-depth study on distance mathematics education examining both content and professional practices.

This issue is packed full and there is certainly something there for every interest.

We hope you enjoy—happy reading!

Reference

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (Aug 18 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

