
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Mario Muñoz Organero received his MSc in Telecommunications Engineering from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in 1996 and his PhD in Telecommunications Engineering from the Carlos III University of Madrid, Spain in 2004. He is an Associate Professor at the Carlos III University of Madrid. His research has included topics related to open architectures for e-learning systems, open service creation environments for next generation networks, advanced mobile communication systems, pervasive computing and convergent networks. His main current interests are in e-learning and m-learning technologies. He has participated in European-funded projects such as E-LANE, and in Spanish-funded projects such as MOSAIC learning and Learn3.

Fernando A.F. Ferreira obtained his 5-Year degree in Business Administration in 1998, his MSc in Economics and Business Sciences in 2002 and his PhD in Quantitative Methods Applied to Economics and Management in 2008 from the University of Algarve, Portugal. In 2009, he was granted with a Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation fellowship for Postdoctoral studies at the University of Memphis, Tennessee, USA. Presently, he is an Adjunct Professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Santarém, Portugal and an Adjunct Research Professor at the Fogelman College of Business and Economics, University of Memphis. His theoretical and applied research has been published in national and international journals.

The way we are required to learn today by accommodating the demands of a fast moving and globalised world in an agile ecosystem of people and information systems is greatly influenced by intercultural aspects. This is even more relevant when trying to create convergent educational areas such as the European Higher Education Area. The design of

successful and efficient educational systems requires taking into account different cultural approaches while avoiding social exclusion problems.

In this *IJIIM* special issue, a sample of the best papers of the 2009 IASK Teaching and Learning International Conference is presented. The event took place in Porto, Portugal, and the papers are mainly focused on issues related to *cross-culture learning, cultural traditions, educational needs and challenges, ICT and information management*.

The first of the papers, entitled 'Pedagogical traditions in EU universities: challenges and opportunities', by Isabel Huet, Ana Baptista, Dayse Neri de Sousa, Diogo Casanova, Jeanne Schreurs and Danguole Rutkauskiene, presents the results of a survey conducted at four HE institutions in four European countries: Portugal, Belgium, Sweden and Lithuania in three dimensions:

- 1 the educational model/concept
- 2 ICT and learning enhancement
- 3 HE teachers training.

Although the paper does not go into many specific details, it is able to capture some relevant questions for reflection in these three dimensions. The fact that the study includes HE institutions from four different countries is also an important point for the generalisation of the results.

The second research paper, entitled 'Challenges of civic education in Portuguese basic schools', by Fernanda Nogueira, António Moreira and Ana Pedro, has also been developed in Western Europe, but in a basic school context, and it is a good reflection about a particular case of a non-disciplinary curricular area (Civic Education in Portugal), the way it is implemented and the weaknesses in the taken approach. The method followed to analyse the issue is based on interviews and, although the group of interviewees is small, the results are good for motivating reflection among the research community.

Still in Western Europe, the third study, entitled 'A preliminary study of psychological and educational support requested by students from the University of Alicante', by Raquel Suriá Martínez, Tomas Ordóñez Rubio and Domingo Martínez Maciá, analyses data from a considerable number of students studying at the University of Alicante, Spain, regarding the need for psychological and pedagogical support. The evolution patterns in numbers and types of services requested are well presented and show tendencies that are likely to coincide with many other HE institutions. The paper analyses four different types of requests using four different questionnaires. The results are of interest for the research community since they identify key aspects arisen in the last decade.

Moving to Eastern Europe, the fourth research paper, entitled 'Forming didactic skills in the students of the faculty of sports and physical education of Galati, Romania', by Mircea Dragu and Corina Dobrota, provides interesting data about the educational system in Romania (particularly related to sports and physical education) in a country in the process of transition to democracy and fostering new values in the educational system. The paper captures the importance of the human values in training the students. The paper presents the results with students and the importance they perceive in having a model in their trainers. The paper also stresses the importance of promoting the vocational aspects in the students.

In an Asian context, the fifth contribution, entitled 'Research trends of ICT delivery systems in Malaysian higher education institutions: a content analysis', by Irfan N. Umar, Nur H. Kamal, Nurullizam Jamiat, Mona Masood and Wan Fauzy W. Ismail, considers 100 contributions to a national conference in Malaysia and presents the results of such analysis. Some important ICT research trends in Malaysian higher education institutions are traced by conducting a content analysis of the proceedings of a national conference. The results are aligned with common sense. There is a trend to move to new Web 2.0 technologies. Although the numbers are presented for a particular country, educational researchers could find the methodology used useful for their own environment.

Developed in Australia, the sixth article, entitled 'Homogeneity, permanent residency and racism: experiences of Indian students at an Australian Sandstone University', by Harshi Gunawardena, Rachel Wilson, Steve Georgakis and Nigel Bagnall, presents and evaluates the repercussions of racism towards young Indian people in Australia. The evolution of the university system in Australia is presented and the importance for the GDP is also highlighted. The racist behaviour at a particular university in Australia against Indian students is presented and some interesting reflections are made. The paper is successful in capturing the main issues and presenting the facts motivating the reflection about collateral but highly related issues to the educational system in Australia.

The seventh paper, entitled 'Lifelong learning across cultures: an examination of learning provision for a particularly disadvantaged group', by James Ogunleye, reinforces the importance of lifelong learning and highlights some of the issues discussed in the other papers, but focusing on a particularly disadvantaged group of people. The paper provides data about the promotion of life-long learning initiatives in different countries inside the EU and how these countries support the inclusion of people with illnesses through learning programs. Some important differences in the way different actors in different countries act are identified and justified. The paper provides relevant material in the process of convergence in the countries of the EU.

We are grateful to the *JJIM* Editors for this opportunity, and we hope to see you all in the next edition of the IASK Teaching and Learning International Conference.