
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Fernando Alberto Freitas Ferreira is an Adjunct Professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Santarém, Portugal, and an Adjunct Research Professor at the University of Memphis, TN, USA. He holds a PhD in Quantitative Methods Applied to Economics and Management from the University of Algarve, Portugal. Fernando is the President-Elect of the *International Association for Scientific Knowledge (IASK)* and Co-Chairman of the Global Management and Teaching and Learning International Conferences. He is an editorial board member of the *International Journal of Innovation and Learning (IJIL)* and *International Journal of Intercultural Information Management (IJIM)*. He has authored several peer-reviewed papers and made many conference presentations.

Mario Muñoz Organero received an MSc in Telecommunications Engineering (1996) from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and a PhD in Telecommunications Engineering (2004) from the Carlos III University of Madrid, Spain. 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 interest is 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.

The globalisation of economy has tremendous repercussions on the way information and operations are not only managed but also taught and learned. The use of information and communication technologies to reduce barriers for learning and to maximise learning outcomes is nowadays a must for every company. E-learning systems provide an unprecedented set of tools for timely access to information for a lifelong learning-based education economy.

Following *IJIOME*'s previous number, the present Special Issue gives continuity to the dissemination of some of the best papers presented during the *2009 IASK Teaching and Learning International Conference*, held in Porto, Portugal. However, this time, special attention is given to issues related to *collaborative learning, e-assessment, e-learning, ICT, learning opportunities and open learning environments*.

The first contribution, entitled 'Future utility as a key dimension in e-learning quality', by Rosário Cação and António Dias de Figueiredo, captures the impressions of more than 2,000 online trainees regarding their perceived quality of online courses, and assesses the relative importance of different dimensions of quality. The paper concludes that future use is the second most important dimension of quality in e-learning-based professional training, following global satisfaction, which means that quality can be defined as fitness for future use. The results are interesting especially for professional online courses.

In the same line of technology learning-base, the second research paper, entitled 'Train the trainer: moderation methods for online tutors', by Elisabeth Katzlinger-Felhofer and Ursula Windischbauer, explores the fact that online courses require the deployment of different roles and the fact that these roles can change along the implementation of the online course to analyse how students can develop the required skills to be online tutors. The paper is not only able to guide the reader to understand the importance of the acquisition of moderation skills by online tutors but also presents a real case study in which the new tutors answer the questions of a form at the end of their training process. Some interesting reflections are well captured and motivated.

The third contribution, entitled 'Gender, age or teaching experience: Are they issues for primary teachers with ICT?', by Graham Morley, conducts interviews among primary school teachers in the UK to determine if the gender, age and teaching experience of the teacher condition his or her use of ICT to better conduct the education process. The paper provides interesting data which has been overlooked by other studies and provides some reflection about the fact that gender and age are not as important as teaching experience to motivate the teacher to use ICT for teaching.

In the same domain of ICT tools, the fourth paper, entitled 'Electronic foreign language interactions and variations among participants', by Annmarie Gorenc Zoran, Jasmina Starc and Marjan Blažič, highlights some behavioural differences between male and female students when using online communication tools. Although the authors recognise that the student sample considered in the study is limited in diversity and sample size, the points identified constitute a source for inspiration for similar studies in other environments. This is especially important for adaptive tools and environments in which students' participation optimisation depends on the respective gender.

Following the same line of ICT use for learning purposes, the fifth study, entitled 'Consideration of the uses of e-learning: Does one size fit all?', by Joy Chalke, uses two case studies to demonstrate that the use of a virtual learning environment for teaching and learning requires adaptation to the type of students. The paper captures the analysis of students' reactions and constitutes a good reference to understand how different profiles of students deal differently with the tools and elements provided in a virtual learning environment. The paper exemplifies some merits of online educational systems such as personalisation and adaptability.

The sixth paper, entitled 'Hows and whys in online assessment', by Ana Balula and António Moreira, analyses and gives some helpful hints about how to do online assessments. The authors describe some of the positive and negative aspects normally

associated to online assessments and describe their experience in the field to provide ideas about how things should be done. Although there is no developed and analysed data to show the impact of different ways of online assessments, the ideas provided constitute an interesting list for online tutors.

Last but not least, the seventh contribution, entitled ‘College students’ end-of-semester assessment of instructors’ performance: students’ narratives are the best interpretive research tool that validates the survey questionnaire results’, by Nahida El Assi Farhat, tackles the issue of assessing instructors’ performance by analyzing data obtained directly from students in the particular environment of the Humanities and Languages Department of the Hariri Canadian University. The conclusions are well introduced and of important consequences for this type of assessments. The author shows the importance of the use of narrative text and the way it should be analysed and taken into account.

Once again, the opportunity to disseminate the research presented at the *2009 IASK Teaching and Learning International Conference* is greatly appreciated, and we hope to see you all in the forthcoming edition of this scientific event.