
Editorial

Fernando Alberto Freitas Ferreira*

Polytechnic Institute of Santarém,
School of Management and Technology,
Complexo Andaluz, Apartado 295,
2001-904 Santarém, Portugal
and
Fogelman College of Business and Economics,
University of Memphis, USA
E-mail: fernando.ferreira@esg.ipsantarem.pt
E-mail: fernando.ferreira@memphis.edu
*Corresponding author

Mario Muñoz Organero

Carlos III University of Madrid,
Avda. de la Universidad, 30,
E-28911 Leganés, Madrid, Spain
E-mail: mario.munoz@uc3m.es

Biographical notes: Fernando Alberto Freitas Ferreira holds a five-year degree in Business Administration (1998), an MSc in Economics and Business Sciences (2002) and a PhD in Quantitative Methods Applied to Economics and Management (2008) from the University of Algarve, Portugal. In 2009, he was granted with a *Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation* fellowship for post-doctoral 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.

Mario Muñoz Organero obtained his MSc in Telecommunications Engineering (1996) from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and his 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 use of information and communication technologies in learning systems, services and processes is fostering an unprecedented wave of innovations that provide solutions to deal with current learning needs such as lifelong personalised pervasive learning. In a rapidly changing globalised world, there is no longer a division between educational and professional parts in our lives but a seamless combination of learning and practice in which innovative learning platforms are a constituent requirement.

In this special issue of the *International Journal of Innovation and Learning*, papers are mainly focused on issues related to *educational needs and challenges, ICT, innovation and technology-based learning*, being a sample of the best papers presented during the 2009 IASK Teaching and Learning International Conference, held in Porto, Portugal.

The first contribution, entitled 'Learning together: designing effective e-classrooms', by Liz Frondigoun and Helen Jones, captures some ways in which collaborating with remote students of similar disciplines in different jurisdictions, by using communication technologies, provides constructive results both for instructors and students. A case study is presented and the conclusions are of very much interest for the research community.

Based on an online forum domain, the second study, entitled 'Assessment of the online forum', by Carmen Isabel Reyes García and Fátima Sosa Moreno, provides an interesting reflection about how online forums can be used not only for developing competences such as group-working capabilities but also for assessing the results of the learning process. The paper proposes and makes use of some rubrics for this assessment process and highlights the importance of the awareness that students should have of such rubrics.

From a learning strategies perspective, the third research article, entitled 'Innovation in teaching microeconomics and macroeconomics in university', by Eleni Tsami, describes and provides a detailed statistical analysis of the learning outcomes that the use of computers have for teaching micro and macroeconomics. The analysis is done taken into account the data obtained from a practical case study using groups of analysis and control in a particular university in Greece. One of the major points of reflection presented is that the use of computers does not necessarily mean obtaining better learning outcomes both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The case study presented is limited in the diversity of participating students but provides some evidence to be confronted with similar studies.

Still in a technology-based learning context, but focusing on reading concerns, the fourth study, entitled 'A three-tier model of reading instruction supported by technology', by Bette Chambers, Philip Abrami, Robert Slavin and Nancy Madden, presents some evidence about the differences in the reading skills of different children depending on their social background, and presents and evaluates a three tier (or component or element) model that has proven to work well. The model captures the combination of class-room instruction, small group collaboration and personal computer supported learning in a successful way. The paper presents the implementation of the model in several schools both in the USA and UK and the results certainly inspire teachers facing similar situations to deploy the model.

In a very modern ICT innovation-based learning context, the fifth article, entitled 'Do U txt?' – using 'txting' to learn maternal languages: a Portuguese case study', by Sandra Côrtes Moreira and Ignácio Aguaded Gomez, reports an interesting (as well as controversial) subject. The paper captures some points which are many times left out of the studies such as student motivation and creativity. By capturing some data and

providing expectations for new research studies both in Portugal and in Ireland, the paper's results are very promising.

Developed in Australia, the sixth study, entitled 'Rehearsing for an audience: students learning science through video production', by Geoff Hilton, presents the results of a practical experiment with seven years old Australian students in which a learning gain is obtained when substituting text in a writing-to-learn science model by the production of a digital video. The paper reports the influence of students' awareness of target audience and rehearsal behaviours while making digital videos in science. The paper provides interesting material for reflection about the merits of using video recording for maximising learning gains of students.

Following the same line of research (*i.e.*, technological innovation-based learning), the seventh paper, entitled 'Learning in a virtual laboratory: educational applications of three-dimensional animations', by Francisco Gómez-Campos, Salvador Rodríguez-Bolívar, Juan López-Villanueva, Andrés Godoy, Juan Jiménez-Tejada, Abraham Luque-Rodríguez and Juan Carceller, reinforces the importance of discussing some of the issues previously presented, by analysing some parameters and results of using videos to learn. Although there are a significant number of similar experiments applied to similar cases, the paper connects videos to three-dimensional animations. The results are obtained by analysing data of Spanish users and internet available tools and services such as Youtube.

The opportunity given by the *IJIL* editors, to disseminate the research presented at the IASK Teaching and Learning 2009, is greatly appreciated, and we hope to see you all in the next edition of this international event.