Editorial

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Biographical notes: Lorna Uden is Emeritus Professor of IT Systems in the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Technology at Staffordshire University. Her research interests include technology learning, HCI, activity theory, big data, knowledge management, web engineering, multimedia, e-business, service science and innovation, mobile computing, cloud computing, social media, internet of things and problem-based learning.

Welcome to the Vol. 9 No. 4 issue of *IJLT*. This issue consists of four papers. The first paper is, 'The enhancing learning from lectures with epistemic primer podcasts activity – a pilot study' by Anguelina Popova, Paul A. Kirschner and Richard Joiner. The authors in this paper present a pilot study that combines the inexpensive, easy to use podcasting technology with two well documented instructional techniques, advance organisers and higher-order questions, to prepare undergraduate students for lectures. The study also proposes a scenario for using podcasts as part of a full-cycle epistemic activity aiming to stimulate deeper approach to learning.

According to these authors, the study presented the encouraging findings that podcasts, especially integrated in a full-cycle epistemic activity, are highly appreciated by undergraduate students as beneficial for learning from lectures. Furthermore, students reflected on the content, on the effects the podcasts had on their learning from the lectures, and on their own knowledge and performance. The study also demonstrates that students appreciate podcasts as part of a full-cycle epistemic activity which makes them reflect more deeply on the topics they study. However, more empirical studies are required to validate the results.

The second paper is titled, 'An exploration of 3D spatial training in teams with a remotely controlled robotic system' by Iris Reychav, Dezhi Wu, Nir Shvalb and Boaz Ben-Moshe. The authors argue that sophisticated tasks such as teleoperations in surgery are being conducted by robots, which require operators' high-level spatial and team skills. Spatial skills and shared task representations in teams are critical in successfully elaborating decision-relevant information in order to work together seamlessly on complex spatial tasks. In this study, they designed and implemented an innovative remotely controlled robotic system to address this challenge, in addition to a computer simulation system as a control group. These authors also conducted a set of experiments by randomly assigning 418 participants in teams to both systems in order to examine the effectiveness of the robotic system. According to these authors, the results indicate that the robotic system is an effective computer simulation system, and the

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shared task representations negatively affected training outcomes on robotic training teams.

A single experiment is by no mean valid proof that the study is effective. Further research and more empirical studies are needed to verify the claim. It is also useful to explore the contribution of the robotic system on shared task representation perspectives based on the richness of visual and verbal information. Capturing the discussions during the experiment by using a text-based chat or a video has the potential to shed light on potentially higher learning outcomes due to providing higher understanding between words and images in problem solving.

The third paper is, 'Personalised reusability metric for learning objects' by Lian Kei Soo, Eng-Thiam Yeoh and Sin-Ban Ho. The authors in this paper proposed a personalised metric to measure reusability of learning objects. The personalised reusability metric (PRM) is a hybrid of existing metrics based on learning object's properties and user's preference. The learning object's properties are calculated using the metadata of the learning object, whereas the users preference is calculated using the past download records of the user. A prototype system is developed to measure PRM for a set of test learning objects and users. The experimental results showed that PRM could generate a personalised recommendation score for different users, to produce different ranking of a learning object for different users. More studies are needed to validate the results. Comparison between PRM and other existing metrics, with involvement of real users would be a useful next step of the research.

The final paper is 'Self-efficacy and online help seeking tendencies of EFL learners' by Gregory S. Ching, Mei-Chin Lin, Wen-Lin Wang and Wei-Ling Tchong. This paper investigates key factors that affect the engineering students' online learning. Their studies present the findings of the experimental English as a Foreign Language (EFL) online learning course. A total of 105 engineering students participated in a semester long basic English conversation class. Students are assigned learning tasks that can be accomplished either with their smartphones or tablet-PCs, Their results show that students who use smartphones with internet access tend to have more self-efficacy as compared to their peers with no internet access. Similarly, these students also scored significantly higher in the course than their peers without internet access. Furthermore, findings also suggest that students' self-efficacy and help seeking tendencies are much higher in students who are more extroverts, conscientious, and open. Lastly, structured equation modelling was used to validate the influence of self-efficacy and online help seeking tendencies towards the perceived ease of use, intent and actual use of the course. In summary, ubiquitous learning with technology is seen as one of the important paradigm shifts in today's learning. More empirical studies are necessary in this area that can help provide exemplars for practitioners and learners alike.