
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Lorna Uden is Emeritus Professor of IT Systems in the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Technology at the 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 V11N2 of *IJLT*. There are four papers in this issue. The first paper is ‘A study of user participation across different delivery modes of a massive open online course’ by Jane Sinclair, Russell Boyatt, Jonathan Foss and Claire Rocks.

According to these authors, despite the potential that has been claimed for MOOCs courses to transform education, there are very few learner supports.

Their paper reports results and experience from developing and presenting a MOOC which provides both ‘traditional’ and supported modes. Users can opt to study the course in the way familiar within most MOOCs (with peer support and limited tutor input) or to receive a high level of experienced tutor support.

Having both modes run in parallel allows direct comparison between the experiences and achievements of the two groups.

Jane Sinclair, Russell Boyatt, Jonathan Foss and Claire Rocks argue that the CFT MOOC has been successful, and the second run is now under way. On the supported version, completion rates were seven times higher than on the traditional mode, but attainment levels for completing uses were very similar for both groups. Uptake of the supported mode was low and fixed time hangout sessions were not well used. Further work is needed to validate the research.

The second paper is ‘University students’ interactions using scaffolds in two different virtual forums’ by Noemi Verdu-Surroca and Eva Martin-Fuentes. The main goal of this research is to study if there are any significant differences in students’ results after following the same learning instructions for participating in a virtual forum in two different subjects. According these authors, from the results obtained that there was no difference. These authors argue that, what is really important is that there are well-designed methodologies and instructions for participation. The mediator’s participation improves students’ interactions and their involvement. Noemi Verdu-Surroca and Eva Martin-Fuentes further argue that students are more active in their learning process and collaborative communication if the lecturer plays an active role overseeing students’ participation and guiding the construction of knowledge. More research is needed to focus on the factors that contribute to the optimisation of

communication and on the interaction networks established among participants in virtual forums.

The third paper is 'Toward the user-commitment continuum: establishing the importance of realisation' by Alexander Mcleod, Mark Simkin and John Week. The authors in this paper propose the idea of a user continuum, in which 'learning' and 'use' increase commitment over time and are influenced by a variety of change events. They have developed a model of commitment and examine the first stage. To test this model, the authors focused on the first phase of a major enterprise resource planning (ERP) implementation at a military installation, proposed a series of testable hypotheses, and used a participant survey with partial least squares analysis to measure the effects of user awareness, information transfer, and recognition on user realisation of the system. Pre- and post-training results showed model R^2 's of 0.77 and 0.57, respectively, and increases in the initial stage of user commitment was statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. Further work is needed to validate the results.

The last paper is, 'The role of a social context for ICT learning and support in reducing digital inequalities for older ICT users' by Leela Damodaran and Jatinder Sandhu. This paper examines the key role of formal and informal social support in reducing digital inequalities by enabling the digital participation of older people. Findings reported in this paper show that social support has a crucial part to play in reducing digital inequalities for older ICT users. Social support is shown to be a key to reducing the impact these barriers have on older ICT users. The study concluded that "the most serious deficiency identified is the low level of provision of help with 'troubleshooting' to address such matters as connection problems, choice of ISP, and the purchase of ICT devices".

The implications of the research results suggest that for digital inequalities to be reduced significantly will require the development and delivery of *socio-technical solutions* which will offer in an integrated systems approach, hardware and software that is 'user-friendly' in its capability to be adaptive and customised to individual needs and social and technical support that is affordable, sustainable, accessible to older people, both in the home and in the community on demand and on an on-going basis.