Editorial

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Welcome to V12N1 of *IJLT*. This issue consists of four papers. The first is 'Design of a pedagogical model to promote knowledge generation in virtual communities' by Sara Redondo-Duarte, Antonio Sánchez-Mena, Enrique Navarro Asencio and Sandra Gutiérrez Vega. This paper presents a pedagogical model designed to encourage the generation of shared knowledge among participants in a virtual community. The model was based on three fundamental and interrelated pillars consisting of on three parts:

1   structured learning resources that allow individual and collaborative work by the user

2   game mechanics that increase participation in the community

3   dynamisation of the community by the community manager or facilitator.

The model was developed starting with a literature review of open learning systems, the massive online open courses. This review served as a basis to design a specific tool to assess these courses and identify best practices. The tool was subjected to an inter-rater evaluation process prior to its application. Although the evaluation result was positive, future research should address a more in-depth study. An option would be to check the tool's reliability and validity by allowing different experts to assess the same MOOC so as to observe if they get similar results. Further research is needed to find out if different knowledge domains demand different requirements in terms of learning design.

The second paper is, 'Students' evaluation of tutors in distance education: a quasi-longitudinal study', by Sotiris Kotsiantis, Nikolaos Tselios and Michalis Xenos. The aim of this paper is to examine attributes of students' evaluation of tutors in the context of distance tertiary education. According to these authors, there is a lack of studies which contrast application of students' evaluation approaches in a distance education setting against conventional educational institutes.

In this paper, a longitudinal study of students' evaluation of tutors in the context of a distance learning higher education institute is presented by the authors. In the Hellenic Open University, the methodology used is mainly based on the evaluation of tutors by their students. The students are asked once a year to fill in an anonymous questionnaire and return it to the tutors' supervisor. Then all data is processed. The presented study used tutors' evaluation from five consecutive academic years. Analyses of the results show that the tutors' evaluations remained relatively stable across the years. However, ratings were significantly higher for female tutors than for the male tutors.

Students' participation in the evaluation, students' grades and students' attendance in the face to face meetings were positively correlated with the students' ratings. More empirical studies are needed to verify the finding.

The third paper is, 'An examination of virtual environment training fidelity on training effectiveness', by Roberto K. Champney, Kay M. Stanney, Laura Milham, Meredith B. Carroll and Joseph V. Cohn. This paper studies whether pre-training in VEs enables a savings in live training trials. In this study, four-person teams received training on a room clearing task either on a low fidelity VE, a high fidelity VE, or no pre-training at all, after receiving familiarisation on the task. After training, all groups transferred to a live shoothouse for 20 test trials. Results suggest that high fidelity VE pre-training may facilitate both faster skill acquisition and better performance in a transfer environment. Although sample size may have prevented the findings from reaching statistical significance, the effects were consistent and of moderate to high effect sizes, suggesting an effect is present. More research and empirical studies are needed to verify the results.

The last paper is, 'University student satisfaction and perceived effectiveness of a blended learning course', by Chang Zhu. This study examines student satisfaction and perceived effectiveness of a blended learning course and key factors related to their satisfaction and perceived effectiveness in a Belgian University. The results indicate that student background and situational variables (international or local students, full-time or part-time students) perceived the effectiveness of the blended learning course differently. Part-time students had a higher perception of the effectiveness of the blended learning course. International students were more in favour of the blended learning mode than local students. Teacher competence and teacher support were regarded as the most important determinants for student satisfaction with the blended learning course. To verify the validity of the results, more studies are needed.