Editorial

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Biographical notes: Piet Kommers is a Professor of UNESCO Learning Technologies affiliated with the universities of Twente and Utrecht, The Netherlands. His specialty is social media for communication and organisation. As a Conference co-Chair of the IADIS multi-conference, he initiated the conferences of web-based communities and social media, e-society, mobile learning and international higher education. He is a Professor at the UNESCO Institute for Eastern European Studies in Educational Technology and Adjunct Professor at the Curtin University in Perth, Australia.

Margriet Simmerling is a Peer Consultant/Senior Manager for R&D projects in the area of e-society and web-based communities. She participated in the advisory board for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and is an active reviewer for the European Commission. She designs and moderates e-learning modules and workshops in the domain of education technology and psychology at the PhD level.

Web-based learning support systems as we present in this thematic issue, demonstrates a fundamental and always recurring feature of media innovations. It is the lesson that through new technologies traditional functions are emulated so that the human stakeholders like students and teachers arrive at further perfection of delicate functions like personal communication, ideational exchange, telling stories rather than rephrasing facts, etc.

Also, the revalued notion of 'communities' rather than 'groups', 'classes' and 'cohorts', articulates that learning relies on mutual responsibility and a sense of 'togetherness'.

The reporting of recent ICT in educational processes illustrates that technology not only emulates traditional functions like information access and communication; its side-effects elicit the human stakeholders to re-invest in certain aspects of education and learning more than before. It results in a more vital quality awareness and demands higher education to perform better than before. The authors from Spain, Australia, Malaysia, Turkey, China and Algaria share their results.

The article 'Synchronous virtual tools to develop and evaluate cooperative learning in an online learning community' is an eye-opener as it presents the toolkit for collaborative learning in SVC: debate, case studies, team notebook, pairing, and roles. Prudencia Gutiérrez-Esteban, Rocio Yuste-Tosina, Gemma Delicado-Puerto, Juan Arias-Masa and Rafael Martin-Espada discuss different practices gained directly by the team of authors. The main fresh element is the methodology providing an opportunity to achieve learning goals in SVC using e-assessment tasks as e-learning tasks. It is remarkable that in the area of ICT, still the majority of students have to do their exams sitting in a big hall, on a scheduled day and time. Taking exams online would have many advantages.

In the article 'An innovative fuzzy-based multicriteria decision making method for evaluating the performance of electronic exam systems', Santoso Wibowo and Srimannarayana Grandhi formulates electronic exam systems' performance evaluation as a fuzzy multi-criteria decision-making problem, and presents a performance evaluation method for evaluating the performance of electronic exam systems. The results of the empirical study of three electronic exam systems performance evaluations are provided.

New developments in vocational evaluation are further explored in the article 'Vocational students' professional ability: quantitative reconstruction and evaluation'. Xingming Guo and Youyi Chai present an evaluation system that pays attention to the social development of the students. Several roles of the teachers and the students are defined and put in a societal perspective.

Alexander Ugochukwu Ubaka, Kadir Baharudin and Ilham Sentosa explore the web ranking of educational institutes. The study presented in the article 'Webometrics ranking: a less commercialised (and more objective) measure of ranking for institutions of higher learning' highlights the relevance of webometrics ranking.

The article 'Research and development of website application of material mechanics based on flipped course', Qingxiang Xu and Duanyang Zhao also pays attention to the technical difficulties in background management development and propose a new exam model that focuses on the specific benefits of the flipped classroom model.

Some civil engineering students in the final years of their degree have specific problems using knowledge that they should have constructed in their fresh and sophomore years. In the article 'A review on student-centred higher education in civil engineering: evaluation of student perceptions' Irem Sanal presents the results of a study around design-based learning. The questionnaire and results are included.

In the article 'Using digital storytelling to extend the flipped classroom approach', Mohamed Hafidi and Lamia Mahnane present the results of a study at the Algaria University. The data are collected through a demographic questionnaire, three open-ended questionnaires, and a semi-structured interview form. Four videos were prepared to give theoretical input in line with the DST phases and presented asynchronously via LMS. Recommendations for future studies are included.

We wish you inspiration in the critical thinking about hidden side-effects of the many ICT initiatives. It brought educators around the globe to the fresh question: "What is the essence of learning and teaching anyway?"