
Editorial

Lorna Uden

School of Computing,
Faculty of Computing and Digital Technologies,
Staffordshire University,
Mellor Building, College Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2DE, UK
Email: L.uden@staffs.ac.uk

Welcome to V15N1 of *IJLT*: this issue has five papers. The first paper is ‘Peer assessment among business students’ by Viktorija Florjančič. According to the author, in Slovenian higher education, traditional methods of teaching and learning are still prevalent, but teachers can use active teaching methods especially if the course is delivered online. In this paper, the author presents new teaching modalities, supported by ICT, used at a traditional public university where a student-centred pedagogical approach is not encouraged at the institutional level.

According to the author, even though 70.2% of all course students did not have any experience with peer grading, peer assessment improved learning and teaching. Students became more aware of what they needed to learn, how to organise their time and what the teacher expected them to learn. Students were found to be accurate peer reviewers, especially those who took their study seriously – as evidenced by asking the teacher for additional explanation and support and printing study materials that helped them study deeply. Students expressed that they would like to have more online study experiences because the experiences motivate them to participate more in MOOCs that they were unaware of before their online study experience. However, the teacher needed to prepare clear and detailed assignments and assessment criteria. More studies are required to validate the research.

The second paper is ‘Understanding m-learning experiences for blind students’ by Deller James Ferreira, Jorge Lucas Pimmel Pacheco, Luciana de Oliveira Berreta and Tiago do Carmo Nogueira. According to these authors, the social, cultural, economic, and educational opportunities provided by information and communication technologies can greatly benefit blind people, especially the educational use of digital mobile technology (m-learning) which has great potential. The aim of this paper is to present the results of an exploratory case study to serve as a basis for the development of an educational accessible application (app) in higher education.

In this paper, the authors investigated the interactions of blind users on Android smartphones using the available accessibility features to uncover the level of difficulty in their interaction with some design patterns. A study was also conducted to reveal the particularities encountered by blind students when using mobile applications. Although the case study involved only nine blind users, they were able to obtain some useful results. The results of the study indicated positive predispositions of blind students for m-learning because of their huge involvement with smartphones combined with their craving for independence. The main problem revealed during the case study regarding learning in groups was the dependency on other people’s help. The results also highlight

the importance of an educational App for coordinating group tasks for the blind students. Because of the small sample size, more studies are needed to verify the results.

The third paper is, ‘App PT-UA: proposal of an instantiation artefact as facilitator of social learning in a tutoring program’ by Dora Simões, Nuno Soares and Gillian Moreira. These authors argue that tutoring and mentoring programs can help HEI promote student success and well-being and combat drop-out, particularly early drop-out. Changes in student behaviour in the digital age have brought new challenges to existing tutoring and mentoring programs. There are advantages to integrate social network environments and new digital mobile technologies into such programs.

The emerging use of mobile devices has challenged higher education institutions to think of innovative ways to engage their students and teachers. This paper describes the development of an innovative artefact – University of Aveiro’s Tutoring Program (PT-UA). The App PT-UA is based on mobile learning applications and a social network environment. The development of the App PT-UA is grounded in design science research (DSR). The proposed prototype is supported in an online social networking concept where all participants can publish and share ideas. It provides GPS navigation, an events calendar, real-time chat, user profiles, and a community where users can post and comment on other users’ posts. It is very disappointing that there are no actual evaluations of the use in this paper. The App must be evaluated with real users.

The fourth paper is ‘A case study of short-term exposure to hybrid learning’ by Min Kyu Kim and Lauren Margulieux. According to these authors, the use of online modules in conjunction with face-to-face classes creates a hybrid learning environment. In this paper, the authors investigated whether short-term use of online/off-campus learning modules (i.e., two weeks or fewer) might help instructors and students engage in teaching and learning if class schedules were abruptly switched to online. They examined student perceptions of motivational and emotional engagement during a short-term online learning intervention and instructor perceptions of hybrid pedagogy. These authors predicted that online learning and technology-mediated communication would fill the gap caused by campus closures and promote positive teaching and learning experiences. They also assumed that the supportive features of hybrid learning would benefit students with low motivation and negative feelings prior to short-term online intervention.

Results show that student feelings of anxiety and shame significantly changed during the short period of online learning. Despite some negative emotions, many participants valued their hybrid learning experiences. Reflections on online teaching and learning also suggested some ways to improve online learning intervention design that might motivate students and sustain positive emotion. Because of the small sample size of the students, more empirical studies are needed to confirm the results. It is also important to consider whether affective changes during short-term online intervention influence cognitive effort and learning achievement.

The last paper is ‘Assessing subjective and objective information literacy at upper secondary schools – an empirical study in four German-speaking countries’ by Sabine Seufert, Katarina Stanoevska-Slabeva and Josef Guggemos. These authors argue that information literacy (IL) is a key 21st century skill. They define IL and present a seven-dimensional IL model aimed at creating a basis for pedagogical concepts to promote IL in order to close a gap in the empirical curriculum and teaching research.

According to these authors, two types of test instruments are evaluated: a performance test for objective information literacy (OIL) and a self-assessment instrument for subjective information literacy (SIL).

Both instruments were validated by means of item response theory. They utilise a sample with $N = 432$ upper secondary students from German-speaking countries. Rasch scalability of the instruments was demonstrated. Reliability equals in the case of OIL for EAP/PV .84 and for WLE .88; in the case of SIL, .75 and .77 respectively. For OIL, they present a proficiency level model to ensure a criterion-based interpretation of test scores. In terms of instructional sensitivity, they provide evidence for a positive influence on students' grade and IL-related content in class on OIL. The correlation between OIL and SIL equals .52. Further research and validations are needed.