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## Editorial

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### Paul Lam\*

The Chinese University of Hong Kong,  
Shatin, New Territories, Hong Kong  
Email: paul.lam@cuhk.edu.hk  
\*Corresponding author

### Eva Y.W. Wong

Hong Kong Baptist University,  
Kowloon Tong, Kowloon, Hong Kong  
Email: evawong@associate.hkbu.edu.hk

### Patrachart Komolkiti

KX,  
King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi,  
Bangkok 10140, Thailand  
Email: patrachart.komo@kmutt.ac.th

### Chetwyn Chan

The Education University of Hong Kong,  
10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong  
Email: cchchan@eduhk.hk

**Biographical notes:** Paul Lam is an Associate Professor in the Centre for Learning Enhancement and Research (CLEAR) and Associate Director in Centre for eLearning Innovation and Technology (ELITE) at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). He has extensive research interest in education including case-based teaching and learning, web-assisted teaching and learning, flipped classroom approach, eLearning, mLearning and blended learning. He also has experience in designing educational tools.

Eva Y.W. Wong retired as the Director of the Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning at Hong Kong Baptist University in January 2021, after working in tertiary education institutions in the UK and HK in the past 35 years. She is currently a private consultant working on projects with the university. She became a Principal Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy in 2018, affirming her contributions to teaching and learning. Her expertise is in the enhancement of student learning through the use of engaging and learner-centred pedagogies leveraged on e-learning, and she maintains interests in these areas.

Patrachart Komolkiti received his Bachelor's degree from the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, Master's degree from Northwestern University, USA, and Doctoral degree from Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand,

all in Electrical Engineering. He served as the Chairperson of the Department of Computer Engineering, Assumption University, Director of the Learning Innovation Center and Acting Director of Office of Academic Affairs, Chulalongkorn University. He is currently the CEO of KX, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. He is also the Chair of eLearning Forum Asia.

Chetwyn Chan is the Vice President (Research and Development) and Peter T. C. Lee Chair Professor of Psychology at The Education University of Hong Kong. He obtained his PhD in Educational Psychology in 1995 from the University of Alberta, Canada. He has been an Elected Fellow of the American Psychological Association since 2008 and Fellow of Hong Kong Psychological Society since 2007. His research work focuses on exploring mechanisms underlying human learning, particularly perceptual and cross-modal learning employing brain imaging, electroencephalograms and behavioural methods.

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The pandemic has pushed us to experiment with new ways of teaching and learning. After a couple of years' exploration and try-out, teachers and students are more technically and mentally prepared than ever to use various kinds of educational technologies and participate in various kinds of virtual and online learning activities. Teaching and learning is not restricted by time and space because a great deal of the above-mentioned functions can be accessed by teachers and students on mobile devices.

The new experience inevitably leads to the rethinking of how we should teach and learn at the time when there is no more pandemic. Will education ever be the same? Active exploration of the new normal of teaching and learning has become crucial and imminent. In fact, the discussion of mixing both face-to-face and online learning practices for higher achievements has been ongoing in the search for blended learning methods. As defined by Garrison and Kanuka (2004, p.96), "Blended learning is a thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences enabled by technologies." A good mix of physical and online teaching and learning strategies utilises the advantages of both worlds. The experience of the pandemic perhaps may have provided additional momentum for the move towards this direction. Pacheco (2021, p.5) mentioned that the pandemic "accelerated already existing trends."

There is no single good mix of physical and online teaching and learning strategies. Also, the exploration of a blended teaching and learning experience should not be limited to the notion of replacement, i.e., finding a way to replicate what we can achieve in a physical classroom in an online environment. We should look for ways to improve education, such as using the opportunity to achieve transformative and paradigm-shift in education and facilitate learning that is student-driven, active and interactive.

The changes should not be limited to classroom setting as well in the search for improvements for future education. For example, we can question ourselves how laboratory-based teaching activities can be benefited from the latest technology. Will location-based learning such as field trips be different too? The advancement in AR/VR technology, computer simulations and map tools has created 'new learning venues' for students to enjoy immersive and authentic learning even at home. Such technology has been applied during the spread of the pandemic to enable students to perform virtual experiments or go to virtual field trips.

During the pandemic, technology facilitated collaborative activities where participants can be geographically remote. It supported inter-disciplinary, inter-cultural

learning as well as virtual student exchange program at course/program level. Cultivating students to have cross-disciplinary and global perspectives is an important goal for many universities. The new practice may enable individual teachers to incorporate collaborative learning in their courses.

Technology can also be used for learning outside the curriculum. Extra-curricular learning activities expand students' social circle that contributes to their academic and career success. Technology can be applied to service learning and academic advising to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

The special issue has a collection of 11 papers that reveals a range of lessons learnt during the pandemic, which can serve as reference for rethinking education practice for the future.

The first paper by Chan, Shroff, Tsang, Ting and Garcia is a description of a novel active pedagogy called collaborative problem-based learning and peer assessment implemented in junior secondary mathematics classes in Hong Kong. The pedagogy involves the use of online whiteboards in the classroom to achieve active learning and interactive engagement. The authors summarise the experience of this approach during the pandemic, and also discuss the use of the technology in the future.

The second paper by Gatrell explains the experience of an 'extended classroom' in the form of learning community through learners engaging in video-based peer coaching. The strategy opens up a great deal of new learning opportunities outside the space and time of a traditional classroom, and makes a timely arrangement during the pandemic. It is also suggested that peer coaching can be based on recordings of both in-person and online learning in the 'extended classroom' for a wide range of innovative learning designs.

The third paper by Tong, Cheung, Wong, Chung, Ngan, Hwang, Choi and Tang has a review of the changes to the assessment arrangements in the health professional education during the pandemic and solicit students' views towards the experience. The paper points out a number of key concerns students have regarding online assessment, such as the anxiety of using technology and the worry of academic dishonesty. Students do not feel confident that the current technologies can completely ensure a cheating-free environment.

The fourth paper by Castillo, Olorga, Lagran and Carpio describes the authors' effort in utilising a game called NationStates during the pandemic to let students learn international relations through engaging in activities of creating states and making decisions for the states in the game. It is found that the game can be administered effectively with students in remote locations during the pandemic; but teacher's debriefing of the game is an important component which may not be conducted as effectively online as in the classroom.

The fifth paper by Chen and Hardy has a discussion of the impact of the pandemic towards higher education and adult training in the future. The paper reports the findings of a survey conducted with 1,553 educators in Singapore to solicit their expectation of possible changes. It is interesting to note that to many of the informants the pandemic denotes 'a positive turning point for education'. Teachers and students who are more confident and competent in using educational technology are likely to take advantage of the changes while 'those who fail to make the necessary digital-leap will be those left behind'.

The sixth paper by Wong and Osborne focuses on a new form of technology-enabled field trips that allows students to participate in the trips at different time and at their own pace, thus alleviating the needs of the big group of students gathering at the same time, a wise thing to do during the pandemic. Through a survey with 74 educators and a series of expert interviews and focus group discussions, the authors inspect more closely the benefits of such location-based learning practice and argue that the practice should be useful during the pandemic and even beyond.

The seventh paper by Fingrut and Ng looks at studio-based teaching in architecture education during the pandemic and whether the new practice has implications for the future. During the pandemic, students collaborated using various kinds of digital technologies and platforms that in certain ways enabled students to work on architecture projects, design, create and present their models in the digital medium. The authors explore whether the digitalisation skills and the remote collaboration skills the students developed are in fact desired competence of students in this discipline regardless of the pandemic.

The eighth paper by Boey, Sathish and Koh explores a shift from campus-based in-person assessments to assessments that are project-based and facilitated by technology. The authors have found a number of benefits associated with the new practice, such as enhanced interactions using communication and student response tools in the platform. Students' motivation to learn has increased based on findings from the survey and interviews conducted.

The ninth paper by Duzhin and Tan looks at collaboration of students in project during the pandemic making use of WhatsApp for communication. The authors explore the methods to make sense of the quality of collaboration through analysing the chat messages recorded in the platform as well as visualising these interactions. The authors also explore the correlation between the quality of collaboration and the quality of the team project.

The tenth paper by Cheung, Kwan, Ng, Cheung, Ngan and Tang explores the online peer learning opportunities in anatomy education using the virtual teaching and learning tools. The online sessions include facilitator's live demonstration of plastinated specimens which traditionally relied solely on face-to-face delivery. The authors reported that the new "approach prompts active participation and intellectual exchange between students and teaching staff, encouraging students to respond and ask questions." The success has prompted them to rethink the practice of anatomy education in the future, after the pandemic.

The 11th paper by Lam and Ng reports a campus-wide study of students' perception of the virtual teaching and learning practice during the pandemic. Two rounds of surveys were conducted and in general they find both strengths and weaknesses associated with the new learning practices, and that students are positive about certain specific uses of technology. The study logically leads us to ponder about the role of these uses after the pandemic. Would blended learning be the new normal allowing us to make the best from both the digital and face-to-face worlds?

Last but not least, the guest editors of the special issues would like to express our great appreciation to Professor Gwo-Jen Hwang, Editor-in-Chief of *International Journal of Mobile Learning and Organisation*, and all the reviewers and authors of this special issue.

## **References**

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