

EDITORIAL

Riding giants: how to innovate and educate ahead of the wave

This special issue contains the research proceedings of the 21st annual conference of the Association for Learning Technology, which was held from Monday 1st to Wednesday 3rd of September 2014 at Warwick University (UK). All papers deal with creative ways of using technology to enhance students' learning experience. Three of the papers focus on the role of the teacher, on creative pedagogies and innovative approaches to teachers' professional development (PD). Two papers focus on the role of social media – mobile or non-mobile – within the teaching and learning experience. The majority of the papers deal with institutions and teachers 'Learning to ride' the wave of technology innovation, whereas some are at the stage where they are collecting evidence to suggest that they are 'Staying up, mobile and personal'.

The issue starts off with a paper originating in the United Kingdom, in which Ellis (2014) reports on research in progress within the sector of further education (FE). She describes research embedded in the teaching practice of an FE college, an instance of pedagogical enquiry in a context that is not very research oriented. The paper describes how a research-based approach to curriculum design was applied in which a researcher partnered with FE lecturers in a curriculum design experiment. The goal of the experiment was to explore whether the approach of self-organised learning environments (SOLE) as developed by Mitra (2009) could successfully be applied in vocational education and training (VET). The paper reports on some initial observations about conducting research in live teaching environments, contains first reflections on the SOLE experiment within VET and illustrates how this approach contributes to a culture of collaborative pedagogical inquiry in an FE college.

The second paper by Cochrane *et al.* (2014) also deals with research within a live teaching environment and experimentation with new pedagogies. Their focus is on the PD of teachers in higher education, specifically on how to design and implement PD practices that foster new pedagogies, deemed necessary to cope with ever-changing technologies, and symbolised by the BYOD phenomenon where students (and teachers) bring their own devices to learning and teaching situations. More specifically, the authors feel the need for a more durable framework for creative curriculum design with innovative technology that moves beyond isolated short-term innovative projects. They propose a framework for creative pedagogies that is a blend of the Pedagogy–Heutagogy–Andragogy continuum (Luckin *et al.* 2010), Puentedura's (2006) SAMR model (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition) of educational technology transformation, and Sternberg, Kaufman, and Pretz's (2002) view of creativity involving incrementation (or modification of a current idea) followed by reinitiation (or redefinition). In the paper, the authors combine this framework with the unique affordances of mobile social media resulting in a framework that can support teachers in designing new course activities and assessments that make use of new pedagogies. The paper goes on to describe some examples of how their mobile

social media framework has been implemented in two PD initiatives: an intensive 1-week workshop, and an international project establishing a global community of practice focused on exploring new forms of student collaborative projects.

The third paper by Vivian, Falkner, and Falkner (2014) also focuses on scalable solutions for teacher PD. It investigated whether a massive open online course (MOOC) can serve as a platform for Australian primary school teachers who need to start teaching a new digital technologies curriculum. The aim of the MOOC was twofold: (1) to deliver computer science content for those teachers that are (relatively) new to the area of digital technologies, and (2) suggest pedagogy on how to teach primary school children. Starting from a literature review of existing online PD practices, the authors designed their own online PD programme as a hybrid MOOC, with aspects of a video lecture-based MOOC and of a connectivist MOOC based on sharing and reflecting on experiences of practitioners. The paper describes the design, development and implementation of the MOOC and presents preliminary data about participation and participant experiences. This preliminary data analysis focuses on the usage of the core course platform, and not yet on the usage of the suggested social media platforms (Pinterest, Twitter, etc.) by course participants.

In the fourth paper, Vivian *et al.* (2014) study the way that university students use Facebook for academic purposes at an Australian institution. The authors used a mixed-methods approach, including a questionnaire, observation and online focus group interview. This paper focuses on the data obtained by observing the Facebook activity of 70 students during the course of a 22-week university semester. The data show that while the academically related activity on Facebook was rather limited in comparison to the purely social activity, the academic-focused topics were particularly related to sharing experiences about doing work or procrastinating, course content and grades. Academically related activity increased around certain points in the semester, especially when assignments and exams were near, and the nature of the academic topics differed somewhat across time. The authors demonstrate that academic activity permeates students' personal social networks to a certain degree, and argue that institutions should be aware of the online aspects of students' academic journey.

Editorial process

For this year's conference, the call for research papers and the call for conference abstracts were processed in two distinct streams. On the one hand, the anonymised conference abstracts were blind reviewed by at least two members of the Conference Programme Committee. After a single cycle of re-submission, abstracts were either rejected or selected for inclusion in the conference. On the other hand, the anonymised full research papers were processed through the normal editorial process of the journal, including full double-blind review and elaborate review and submission cycles.

Twenty-two full papers were submitted, co-authored by 62 authors affiliated with institutions in seven countries (14 papers came from the United Kingdom, two from Australia, two from Spain and one each from Italy, Norway, New-Zealand and Pakistan). After a first editorial round, 20 papers remained and were assigned to over 40 different reviewers, 27 of whom agreed to review at least one paper. Each paper was thus double-blind reviewed by at least two different independent reviewers. The editorial criteria for publication were as strict as for any other submission to the

journal, as witnessed by the fact that only 4 of the 22 submissions were selected for publication. Interestingly, the southern hemisphere is strongly represented in the remaining papers, with two papers originating in Australia, one reporting on joint work from New-Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia, and one paper reporting on work from the United Kingdom.

Happy reading!

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