

Editorial - Volume 17, Issue Number 2

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Editorial

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Rory McGreal
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This issue of IRRODL focuses mainly on pedagogical approaches and techniques in ODL. This issue leads off with four papers on pedagogical approaches from Africa. These include a look at various approaches and techniques including connectivism, grouping, and the use of multimedia in the African context. Ramdass and Masithulela from UNISA in South Africa lead with a comparative analysis of pedagogical strategies claiming that they should be both functional and appropriate. They examine strategies in ODL that can be implemented to ensure that students remain on par with face-to-face universities. Kizito, from the Western Cape in South Africa focuses on merging connectivism in learning design with African based technology adoption models including blogging. She examines technology adoption archetypes in African contexts and extracts influences shaping pedagogical technology adoption. The evaluation of an intelligent grouping algorithm is the focus of the article by Muuro, Oboko, and Wagacha in Kenya. They use machine learning techniques to group students based on their collaborative competencies. This enhances grouping with little intervention from the instructor, the authors argue, because the algorithm can guarantee homogeneity and dynamism. The final African paper by Mtebe, Mbilo, and Kisaka comes from Tanzania where the authors research multimedia enhanced content in science and mathematics in secondary schools. They argue that the use of multimedia has enhanced teacher acceptance of the content.

These are followed by four pedagogy-oriented papers from different parts of the world including peer collaborations, online discussions, and personal learning environments. From Italy, Pozzi, Ceregini, Ferlino, and Persico analysed and evaluated the interactions of students involved in peer reviews, comparing paired collaborations with larger groups. They argue that organisational problems in the large groups significantly reduce the time on task activities. Peer feedback is the topic of Ching and Hsu's paper, exploring learners' perceptions when role-playing in a peer feedback activity concluding that role-playing can enhance learners' interpersonal beliefs. On the other hand, Cho and Tobias paper can be yet another contribution to Tom Russel's listing of more than 350 articles showing no significant difference (See: <http://www.nosignificantdifference.org/>). In a study of online discussion groups on a community of

inquiry, their study showed no significant difference in cognitive and teaching presence, satisfaction, and achievement. Sahin and Uluyol's use a perception and use scale to measure Personal Learning Environments. Their data demonstrates that PLEs are easy to access and use, while allowing for personal preferences and control.

Two case studies from Asia follow. The paper by Arinto focuses on the issues and challenges for ODL the Philippines Open University. This includes a discussion of policy development and the administrative changes needed to support innovations. From Mongolia, Tuul, Banzragch, and Salzmaa review course and programme development for elearning in universities.

The final reviewed paper in this issue by Veletsianos and Shepherdson addresses a number of gaps in the scholarly understanding of MOOCs and presents a comprehensive picture of the literature. The authors examine the geographic distribution, publication outlets, citations, data collection and analysis methods, and research strands of empirical research focusing on MOOCs Analysis.

The field notes help to round out the view from Africa in this issue. Warugaba, Naughton, Gauthier, Muhirwa, and Amoroso describe their experience with a MOOC in rural Rwanda. And, there are two book reviews on online, blended and distance education, one from a global perspective.

We believe that you will find these articles and reports interesting and useful. Please pass the links and a free subscription suggestion to your colleagues. Lastly, Dianne and I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who help us bring you IRRODL without charge through their support.

