

EDITORIAL PREFACE

Preface

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Welcome to this issue of the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning, which contains four research papers. Coincidentally, a common theme among three of these papers is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which originally dates from a couple of papers published in the late 1980s (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989), and which has continued to provide a basic model to which many variations have been applied (e.g. Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003.) One of my former academic colleagues found the entrenched use of TAM in Information Systems research to be a somewhat frustrating factor, in that it serves as the basis for a seemingly endless set of variations, but also that it has become received wisdom. Any attempt to provide alternative models is met with considerable resistance. Without wishing to get deeper into that debate, it is nevertheless interesting to see how TAM has been applied to various perspectives of mobile and blended learning in the papers included in this issue.

The first article included here is “An Exploration of Pre-Service Teachers’ Intention to Use Mobile Devices for Teaching” by a group of authors located in various parts of the United States; Jung Won Hur (Auburn University), Ying W. Shen (University of North-

western - St. Paul), Ugur Kale (West Virginia University) and Theresa A. Cullen (University of Oklahoma.) The role of pre-service teachers is very important in transforming educational practice, since these are the educators who we hope will be bringing new ideas and skills into the classroom once they are qualified. In this study, the authors surveyed almost 400 pre-service teachers, at various stages of their courses. From the results, basing their analysis on TAM, they identified four possible factors affecting pre-service teachers’ mobile technology adoption in classrooms; constructivist beliefs, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and self-efficacy for technology integration. The results also made clear how important it is for pre-service teachers to be given appropriate training, skills and experiences in the use of mobile devices in the classroom.

Our second article comes from Portugal, and is “Clustering Students Based On Motivation-to-Elearn: A Blended Learning Approach” by Maria Alexandra Rentroia-Bonito from the GENEQ Consulting Group and Daniel Gonçalves and Joaquim Jorge of the University of Lisbon. The main proposal within the paper is that students can be grouped into a three-cluster structure based on their motivation-to-elearn; students may be categorised as Technology-

driven, Resource-driven or Organization-driven. The value of this clustering is that it may enable instructors to identify which cluster a student best fits into, making it possible to anticipate usability issues that most affect student results. Again basing their analysis on TAM, the authors focus on perceived ease-of-use and usefulness of system functionalities that support learning performance. The insights gained from this study may help the future design of adaptive e-learning interfaces.

Article number three is “Evaluating a Mobile and Online System for Apprentices’ Learning Documentation in Vocational Education: Usability, Effectiveness and Satisfaction” by Alberto Cattaneo and Elisa Motta, from the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, and Jean-Luc Gurtner from the University of Fribourg (Switzerland.) This paper investigates the potential role of mobile learning in vocational education and training in Switzerland, where students split their time between the classroom and the workplace. The subjects of the study were 45 apprentice chefs, split into two classes; one as the experimental class, the other as the control group. The experimental group were given access to mobile devices and relevant applications. Once again TAM was used in the analysis, using measures of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. The results of the study not only show some of the benefits of a mobile learning approach, but also emphasise the important role of the teacher in ensuring that mobile tools are properly integrated into the overall learning process.

The fourth and final research article in this issue is “Presence and Perceived Learning in Different Higher Education Blended Learning Environments” by Wan Zah Wan Ali, Rouholah Khodabandelou, Habibah Jalil and Shaffe Mohd Daud of Universiti Putra Malaysia. This is the only paper in this issue which does not use TAM for its analysis. Instead, some statistical analysis is applied to survey data collected from three public universities in Peninsular

Malaysia to compare the different blended learning experiences of undergraduate students. More than 300 students took part in the study, which looked in particular at the importance of physical presence in blended learning. Blended learning programmes may vary in the amount of face-to-face time in the overall provision. The results of this study seem to suggest that physical presence in face-to-face situations is a very important component of blended learning, given that the students who had a higher level of presence in their courses reported higher levels of perceived learning.

Each issue of the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning has its own particular focus. Sometimes this is because a set of papers have been revised and extended from a specific conference, such as mLearn, or because there is a special issue on a particular topic. At other times, as with this issue, there is a happy coincidence that links papers that are published together. The emphasis on TAM in this issue is one such example, and I look forward to seeing other common themes emerge from the ongoing work in our research community

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