Editorial Preface

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Welcome to the first issue of the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning for 2020 (volume 12, issue 1). The six articles in this issue cover a wide range of topics in mobile and blended learning, including the use of WhatsApp, project-based learning, teacher education and student communication in distance learning.

We begin this issue with "Student Reflections and Self-assessments in Vocational Training supported by a Mobile Learning Hub" by Lisbeth Amhag from Malmö University, Sweden. Her article looks at how a group of student teachers reflected on, and self-assessed, their professional training in higher distance education. The students in this study were supported by a mobile learning hub covering both mobile and blended activities. The study was based on five levels of reflection: reporting, responding, relating, reasoning and reconstructing. The author's findings emphasise the importance of giving student teachers agency, supported by mobile and blended tools, to help them make sense of their experiences in personal and professional learning.

Our second article, also in the field of teacher education, is "Using WhatsApp for Teaching a Course on the Education Profession: Presence, Community and Learning" by I Ketut Suardika, Alberth, Mursalim, Siam, Lelly Suhartini and Nikolaus Pasassung from Universitas Halu Oleo, Kendari, Indonesia. This article examines the extent to which students interacting using social media experience a different level of social presence, sense of community and perceived learning compared to those interacting face-to-face. For the study being reported, students of Primary School Teacher Education were randomly divided into two groups to compare conventional face-to-face classroom instruction with a group that used the WhatsApp social media tool for learning. Questionnaires measuring social presence, sense of community and perceived learning were pre- and post-tested, followed immediately by interviews. The WhatsApp group reported a stronger sense of community, but both groups experienced an equal level of social presence and perceived learning. The authors conclude that the reported benefits of WhatsApp outnumbered its drawbacks.

The third article in this issue is "Teaching Design and Practice of a Project-Based Blended Learning Model" by Yanrong Tong (University of Jinan, Shandong, China), Kinshuk (University of North Texas, Denton, USA) and Xuefeng Wei (Ludong University, Shandong, China). Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Blended Learning (BL) have been widely used in universities, but so far there is no model for bringing these two approaches together. This article outlines such a model - Project-Based Blended Learning (PBBL) - and describes an application of the PBBL model in a course on Single Chip Microcomputers (SCM). The article outlines how the model was applied in this context, and concludes that PBBL can improve students' self-learning, practical application and innovation.

Article number four in this issue is "Towards a Conceptual Framework Highlighting Mobile Learning Challenges" by Mourad Benali (University Mohammed I, Oujda, Morocco) and Mohammed Ally, (Athabasca University, Athabasca, Canada). The article uses a review of the literature to identify the current challenges facing mobile learning implementation. It outlines a conceptual framework to capture the various themes expressed in the selected literature. The study adopted a systematic

review of 125 peer-review papers published between 2007 and 2017. 24 barriers to mobile learning implementation were identified and grouped into four conceptual categories: Technological, Learner, Pedagogical and Facilitating Conditions. The authors suggest that the proposed framework may act as guide for all those who are implementing mobile learning programs.

The fifth article is "Blended Learning as a Good Practice in ESL Courses Compared to F2F Learning and Online Learning" by Wei Zhang (Beijing University of Technology, Beijing, China) and Chang Zhu (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium). The theme of this article is to compare blended learning with face-to-face and online learning, basing the analysis on Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. A questionnaire was administered to 653 students, which revealed that blended learning was reported to have a higher effectiveness than traditional learning for all seven principles and a higher effectiveness than online learning for most of the principles. In addition, learning modes and gender both showed significant effects on students' perceptions of all seven principles.

The sixth and final article in this issue is "Lone Wolves in Distance Learning? An Empirical Analysis of the Tendency to Communicate Within Student Groups" by Ina Kayser and Thomas Merz from IST University of Applied Sciences, Düsseldorf, Germany. This article examines the concept of the 'lone wolf' in distance learning, the type of student who places little emphasis on communicating with the university or other students. The authors focus on the communication patterns of distance learners and identify a division of students into three groups according to their tendency to communicate: Power communicators, regular communicators and lone wolves. The article also reveals that students in later semesters prefer synchronous communication as opposed to asynchronous use of emails. The article concludes with some suggestions that learning analytics and a shift in the role of academic support towards mentoring can support an increase in the tendency to communicate and, ultimately, student motivation and performance.

With our first issue of volume 12, we move into the 2020s as enthusiastic as ever to learn about the future activities of the international mobile and blended learning research community.

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