Editorial Preface

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Welcome to the first issue of the *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies* for 2019 (Volume 19, Issue 1).

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, many schools from primary, to secondary and post-secondary level are forced to move their courses as well as teaching and learning online from the traditional classroom settings. IJDET aims to be a platform to provide schools and teachers experiences, information, and recommendations shared and summarized by researchers in the educational technology and advanced learning technology area.

From this issue and the next, with the support of the publisher IGI Global, IJDET makes these selected COVID-19 research open access by the public and hopes they can help our schools and teachers to choose proper technologies and platforms; teachers to be aware of the tools and systems that make them provide effective instructions; and, students to learn quickly and efficiently.

This issue includes three regular papers and three papers that address the special issue of COVID-19.

In the first regular paper "The Influence of Gamification and Platform Affordances on User Engagement in Online Learning," Olga Solovyeva and Kseniya Veryaeva investigate the relations among user engagement, platform affordances and gamification. They choose a commercial online platform for learning English, Skyeng, for their study. The factor analysis and linear regression analysis are taken to analyse the collected data. In the end they find four affordance factors to explain user engagement: external reward, technology credibility and usability, adaptability, and phasing and intermittence. Moreover, the technology credibility and usability is found to be the most influential factor.

Flavio Manganello, Francesca Pozzi, Marcello Passarelli, Donatella Persico, and Francesca Maria Dagnino in the second regular paper "A dashboard to monitor self-regulated learning behaviours in online professional development" reveal a 4Cs Dashboard on Moodle. The 4C stands for Consume, Contribute, Create, and Connect and the dashboard provides real-time personal report for students their Self-Regulated Learning behaviours. Although the perceived usefulness of the dashboard is significantly higher than the median point of the scale, 45% of participants never visited the collective dashboard and 48% of participants never visited the individual dashboard due to the heavy course workload. Last but not the least, participants who had used either of the dashboards have significant better learning achievements than those who chose to not use any.

Changsheng Chen and Xiangzeng Meng in the last regular paper "Exploring the relationship between students' behavioral patterns and learning outcomes in a SPOC" discuss the behaviour patterns and learning outcome that students may have differently in a small private online course (SPOC). They use an online learning platform, StarC, which is based on the concept of SPOC to collect learning behaviours. They use Pearson correlation analysis on the frequencies of the eight identified basic behaviours and students' final grades and find statistically significant positive relations.

The first special issue paper "Formative Assessment as an Online Instruction Intervention: Student Engagement, Outcomes and Perceptions," written by Zexuan Chen, Jianli Jiao, and Kexin Hu, addresses the needs of formative assessments in online learning during COVID-19 pandemic. They design frequent tasks, quizzes and tests as formative assessment in the pure online instruction process

and collect students' learning performance to verify whether the proposed formative assessment has impact on students' learning outcome and engages students in the online learning process. They find students' scores in both of listening test and prepared speech are significantly better when compared to students in the earlier semester.

Sangeeta Sharma and Arpan Bumb in the second special issue paper "The Challenges faced in Technology-driven Classes during COVID-19" touch the challenges of moving classes to online; for instances, "lack of access to resources and infrastructure", "increased workload at home", "mental stress and uncertainties", "inadequate training and responsiveness of administrative authorities", "students and teachers don't have access to the Internet due to live in the remote area and/or incessant power outages", etc. They use TOPSIS (Technique for Order of Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution) to rank the challenges and EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) to combine some of the challenges. In the end, they use ISM (Interpretive Structural Model) to explain the recommendations on how to mitigate the challenges.

The last special issue paper "Teacher Experiences in Converting Classes to Distance Learning in the COVID-19 Pandemic," written by Michael W. Marek, Chiou Sheng Chew, and Wen-Chi Vivian Wu, conduct a survey worldwide to investigate faculty's experiences of moving their classes to online due to COVID-19. In their study, there are around 90% of faculty are from Asia/Pacific Rim region. The faculty perceive much higher workload and stress when moving their classes to online. Also their study reveals that many schools have had sanctioned technology solutions. However, only 43% of faculty choose to use the school-provided learning management system and almost 85% of faculty choose to use social messaging apps (e.g., Messenger, LINE and WhatsApp). They also find that faculty's experiences in teaching online earlier in previous semester(s)/term(s) have positive influence.

With our first issue of Volume 19, we look forward to reaching our twenty years of publication in 2022, and to continue being the best platform of experience and innovations sharing in the distance education technology research community during COVID-19 pandemic and post-COVID-19 as well.

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