

## Message from the Editor-in-Chief

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Common to all tertiary educators in current times have been to re-think and recalibrate existing learning and teaching offerings, so they are appropriately aligned with the opportunities and promises of openness and flexibility. This may manifest as allowing technology to dominate, scaffold and drive our educational classrooms, rather than the more traditional personalised comfort of face-to-face instruction. Challenges abound for educators to ensure that they develop for their students a sense of belonging, community, and ‘place’ in the virtual classroom. Another challenge is ensuring that the design of their educational offerings tap into, and nurture the development of student learning styles and approaches to learning, that can lead to a successful, meaningful, productive and enjoyable student learning experience.

It is important to reinforce how vital research and publishing in the field is, and to draw our attention to the need to focus foremost on the value we add to what is already known, and on the unique contribution that we continue to make to the higher education field that is e-learning, flexible, open, distance and online. We are proud to present this issue with 19 contributions from South Africa, Saudi Arabia, China, Turkey, Africa, Thailand and Chile. This issue has a strong focus on improving the academic delivery and access of information to students in higher education. Research on information and communication technology deficits and innovations, assessment techniques, balancing home, study and employment, and leadership, will provide interesting and informative reading for all.

The first article by Jill, Ede and Masuku examines the challenges and opportunities of emergency remote teaching in institutions of higher learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. In order to navigate the challenges of remote learning successfully, their findings reported that higher learning institutions should acquire suitable information and communication technology equipment, develop the requisite facilities, implement rules and regulations for their availability, and provide adequate maintenance. These recommendations promote technologically compliant ethics within the institution, providing easy access to teaching and learning by both students and academic staff at an affordable and fixed cost in safe, conducive, and unrestricted environments for students. The next article by Sokol and colleagues explored the nature of social networks as dynamic, accessible virtual planes of communication, through which users carried out the cross-border and transient exchange of information and emotions, in order to meet their communication needs. They highlight the ambiguity of communication in social networks: not everyone who communicates on social media knows the intentions of other people. Whilst such communication generates the selectivity or concealment of true meanings in the author's texts, the additional meanings are taken on during the recipients' interpretation. The third article by Alfordy and Othman explored whether teachers' practices and implementation of Classroom Assessment Techniques (CAT) enhanced students' performance in Accounting Principles' courses. Additionally, they assessed students' perceptions concerning the impact of English language proficiency (EP) and the availability of Saudi-centric textbook materials on students' performance. Their findings concluded that CAT improved students' performance and positively transformed the teaching and learning environment.

Research by Ghonim and Corpuz considered a new digital system for competency-based learning enhanced by Blockchain and badge technologies, to improve and indicate practical classes' quality in applied programs. Their findings reported that the digitalization of skills and competency-based credentials should be enhanced to foster ‘knowing-by-doing’ and practical capabilities, which should be incorporated in applied education to achieve optimum CBE results that support recruitment and professional development processes. The next article by Jervis,

Schonwetter and Shekhawat investigated the effects of the application of instructor-made videos (IMVs) on a population of first-year Master in Audiology students. The findings demonstrated that the effect of IMVs was largely positive, particularly as indicated by students and to a lesser degree, by the increase in grades. The sixth article by Tsakeni and Jita examined how conditions in multiple-deprived science classrooms are intricately connected to the sustainable development goals (SDG) of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 on sustainability. The study findings show how the teaching and learning in multiple-deprived classrooms may pose as a challenge to the attainment of the SDGs, pointing out to some implications for practice.

Research by Ahmod and Zhang aimed to visualize the usefulness of several potential research and teaching mode practices for instructing students at the higher education level. Their results highlight the necessity to develop potential teaching strategies. The next article by Ahmed Asfahani investigates the reality of balancing family and work environments, specifically in reducing conflict among academic staff in the Middle Eastern region. The ninth article by Khalid and colleagues explore the poor academic performance of international students and weak academic communication between international doctoral students and Chinese faculty members. The findings shed light on the intention of students to pursue a doctoral degree in Chinese higher education, and how it significantly delayed their research self-efficacy development. The next article by Huseyin Erol explores the extent to which digital literacy and media literacy among the 21st century skills are included in the social studies curriculum of the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades in Turkey. The study found that among the skills included in the social studies curriculum, digital literacy and media literacy skills, four learning outcomes are associated with digital literacy, and three learning outcomes associated with media literacy. Hungwe and Ndofirepi's study examines how the *ukama* ethic concerning the Covid-19 pandemic-induced a 'new normal' to African higher education. The *ukama* ethic is a communally-oriented value system designed to militate against socially isolated individualism in remote learning, and an ethic of care that combats social prejudices occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic in African higher education. The twelfth article by Ajani and Gamede continues in the South African context, and explores the need for the decolonisation of higher education curriculum to ensure reflection of diverse realities in South Africa, acknowledging that while some scholars promote the need for decolonisation, others argue for decoloniality and glocalization. The study argues why and how South African higher education institutions can place teacher education at the centre of learning experiences, for students to adapt and maximize the realities in their contexts, and for responsive lived experiences.

Coll and Ruch's research investigates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education institutions, particularly the academic deanship, and a model for the deanship in a post pandemic institution is included. El-Tahan and colleague's study takes us to Saudi Arabia where they studied the positive role of Jouf University in serving and developing the society for Vision 2030, by understanding the influence of training, continuous education, technical consultations, and applied researches on management development for employees and organizational development of institutions. Msimanga et al's research examined how Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) student teachers perceived Communities of Practice during their work-integrated learning, by adopting a generic qualitative research design involving a group of PGCE student teachers at a South African university. Sayed Almousawi's research explores the pedagogical efficacy of dedicated language learning applications, focusing mainly on aspects of second language acquisition. The findings revealed that dedicated language learning applications tend to provide mechanical forms-focused practice without facilitating collaborative learning, nor focusing on developing users' communicative competence, which suggests they reflect a behaviouristic view of language learning.

Wonngchantra et.al's study considers the level of mental health power and selected factors related to the mental health power of nursing undergraduate students at Srimahamarakhm Nursing College in Thailand. The results showed that when considering mental health power on each aspect, it was found that emotional stability, encouragement and problem management, were below the threshold level on all aspects. The next article by Vidal-Espinoza and colleagues based their research on the knowledge that scientific research is becoming increasingly important in higher education, as it helps students to understand scientific knowledge and provides tools to construct and interpret the meaning of what science provides. Applied over three universities in Chile, the findings showed a positive correlation between age with knowledge contribution and type of school, and knowledge transfer with type of school. They concluded that the type of school and age could be relevant to

obtain better results in the contribution and transfer of scientific knowledge. The last article in this issue is from Valerie Couture, and she considers the importance of Counsellor education programs to counsellors in training, through the exploration of online students' experiences in an experiential community immersion assignment. The study concluded the participants reported an overall increase in multicultural awareness through their community immersion experiences.

I am certain that this edition has something for everyone to enjoy and learn from. As always, I would like to thank all contributors and reviewers who continue to make the timely publication of the current issue possible. I look forward to receiving more contributions from researchers and practitioners for our future issues. Wishing all readers all the very best with their research studies.

Warm regards,

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