

EDITORIAL

Furthering Research and Development in Technology-Enabled Learning

Santosh Panda

Considerable attention has been paid, in the recent past, to technology-enabled learning (TEL) and how digital technologies have been facilitating teachers, learners and trainers in transforming the ways they approach teaching-learning and development (Kirkwood & Price, 2016; Sankey & Mishra, 2019). Institutions across the globe use TEL to ‘enhance’ the quality of learning and teaching with the use of technology (Browne et al, 2010) and invest considerably in technologies that could have an impact as such. But, the very ‘enhancement’ vis-à-vis ‘impact’ issue was subsequently contested to visualise an ‘enabling’ stance in the use of technology.

Professional development initiatives based on the enhancement proposition had to struggle as to how to enhance quality in teaching-learning. Concurrent articulation on the scholarship of teaching and learning (Fanghanel et al, 2016; Kirkwood & Price, 2013; McKinney, 2007; Perry & Smart, 2007; Trigwell, Martin & Prosser, 2000) provided impetus to ‘facilitating and enabling’ stances over technology-managed and/or technology-enhanced stances. The focus of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), as a global catalyst of transformations in teaching, learning and professional development, has been to judiciously and effectively integrate and use technologies to enable the practitioners to engage towards quality outcomes. TEL at COL, therefore, was consciously designed as enabling, rather than enhancing (Mishra & Panda, 2020; Ferguson, 2019).

Contemporary research evidence suggests that while digital technologies practically facilitate student engagement in a number of ways, including study logistics, flexibility, and visual learning, there is a need to go deeper into aspects relating to ‘deep learning’ – collaborative, participatory, connected, and creative learning (Henderson, Selwyn & Aston, 2017). It is also imperative to be mindful of what Selwyn (2016) contended as being extra careful in using the oversimplified and deterministic use of the term ‘educational technology’ and what Biesta (2013) discussed as reductive learnification of education.

Studies on both success stories of technologies facilitating meaningful learning, and also the rhetoric of overstating the effect of technology have been reviewed and reported (Henderson et al, 2017, 2015; Jones, 2012). As much as the authors reported “the disparities between the educational potential of technology in comparison to what takes place in practice” (Henderson et al, 2015, p. 122) identifying thirteen conditions for success, there is much need to collect and collate further researches on the experiences of practitioners, researchers and educational managers dealing directly with ‘enabling’ TEL and online learning. The collection of papers in this first issue of *JL4D 2020* reports some recent works of researchers and practitioners of TEL across the globe. Most of these were presented at the COL’s 9th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in Edinburgh, Scotland in September 2019.



In the first invited paper, Lani Gunawardena critically analyses and reflects on cultural inclusion in online learning through examining two capacity development projects (in Ghana and Sri Lanka) which she has led – a mobile and blended learning solution for capacity development of physician assistants in Ghana, and a distance education modernisation project in Sri Lanka. Cultural inclusion was guided by her and colleagues' framework of Online Wisdom Communities (WisCom), which envisages "attainment of transformative learning through collaboration, reflection, and exploration in a wisdom community". This paper should be a significant contribution to design frameworks guiding community practitioners, teachers, researchers and professional developers in the development and implementation of accessible and inclusive online learning. This should also trigger further critical research in this area.

Our first research paper, by Meina Zhu and Curtis Bonk, is on student self-monitoring and self-directed learning through MOOCs, and the required technology, tools and instructional strategies. The authors have examined various instructional strategies, including tutorials, progress bars, internal and external feedback, reflective questions, as also fostering learning communities. Many of these are reported to be significant in facilitating self-monitoring of learners and assisting self-directed learning. This paper is expected to provide further impetus to continuing research on MOOCs.

In the third paper, Whitelock, Edwards and Okada report the research findings of a large-scale international survey on e-authentication, implemented through a European Union project – Adaptive Trust-based e-Assessment System for Learning (TeSLA). Over half of the surveyed students were highly satisfied with various e-authentication instruments like face recognition, voice recognition, keystroke dynamics, forensic analysis, and plagiarism detection; and even more teachers than students reported higher satisfaction with the e-authentication system/suite for online assessment. This is an area which needs further research and probing, since most institutions (especially in the low and middle income countries) are struggling to introduce and sustain an authentic e-assessment system for their teachers and students.

Shironica Karunanayaka and W. M. S. Weerakoon report the results of a research study on the impact of a specific TEL project – the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) – on the process of teaching-learning in Sri Lankan schools. They report that while the use of the C-DELTA platform enhanced digital education leadership skills of teachers, the students also significantly gained in digital behaviour and critical thinking as a result of increased digital literacy and application of newer teaching-learning strategies. This and their related published works should be very useful to school managers, school teachers and educational researchers working for TEL in the school sector.

In recent research at the National Open University of Nigeria, Clifford Amini and Oluwaseun Oluyide investigated the ICT competencies among distance learning students as reported in the next paper. The researchers reported a high level of digital literacy amongst the learners, though most had to struggle to effectively use ICT for knowledge creation, and they recommended that courses on computers and technology should be made compulsory for all learners to make the best use of technology for learning.

In this issue, we present also the findings of two case studies. Our first case study is by Joel Mtebe, Mussa Kissaca, Christina Raphael and Josephine Steven on promotion of youth employment through

ICT in vocational education, and the second case study explores open digital badges in teacher education in India by Freda Wolfenden, Lina Adinolfi and Simon Cross – both should be of interest to researchers and practitioners of TEL, and contribute to their teaching-learning practices.

The two book reviews by Terry Anderson and Paul West, respectively, (two celebrated TEL specialists) should be of interest to readers as well as practitioners of TEL.

It is a privilege for me to have joined *JLAD* as its chief editor. Both Alan Tait and Anne Gaskell, as chief editors at different spells of *JLAD*, have established the quality of the *Journal* and have made it truly international; and I hope to maintain its quality and take it forward. Special thanks to Prof. Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of COL, for inviting me to serve as the Chief Editor, and specifically to Dr Tony Mays, Dr Sanjaya Mishra and Prof Romeela Mohee for facilitating the first issue of 2020 to take off well. We also thank all the peer reviewers who have been supporting *JLAD*. A list of Peer Reviewers who supported the journals in 2019 is included at the end of this editorial as an acknowledgement of their contributions.

I hope, the contributions to this issue are valued, reflected upon and utilised by scholars across the globe. We shall be glad to receive suggestions and critical reflections from the readers to further strengthen the quality of the journal.

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Chief Editor, *JLAD*

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