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Editorial – Volume 26, Issue 3

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As we continue to celebrate IRRODL's remarkable journey, this issue exemplifies our journal's enduring commitment to advancing open and distributed learning through rigorous scholarship and global collaboration. Detailed in "[Twenty-five years of innovation and knowledge sharing: the legacy and future of the international review of research in open and distributed learning](#)," which opened our first 2025 issue, since founding in 2000 as a diamond open access journal, free to both readers and authors, IRRODL has remained steadfast in publishing high-quality research while maintaining international diversity in authorship, readership, and editorial contributions. Our accessibility and innovation have resulted in over 13.5 million downloads and 4 million unique visitors since 2011, with high citation rates and steady impact factor growth reinforcing our advocacy for diamond open access and inclusive scholarship.

With authors from 31 countries contributing to recent volumes (2023–2024), we maintain strong North American and UK representation, while 64.3% of our readers come from the Global South, demonstrating our international relevance. This global reach reflects IRRODL's position as the most cited Canadian education journal and our ranking among the top 20 educational technology journals worldwide.

Fittingly, the current issue includes authors from 7 countries: Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United States. They report on digital education effectiveness during crisis periods, innovative pedagogical approaches including implementation of OER, virtual reality (VR), flipped classroom (FC) and trauma-informed strategies to improve student engagement and consequently learning outcomes across K-12, higher education, music, and language education contexts. The articles also explore teacher preparedness and professional development, including digital literacy training, technology integration, and crisis-responsive teaching methods in collaborative settings that bridge educational gaps in ODL.

Trauma-Informed Education in Open Online Courses

Watt, Krishnamoorthy, Ong, and Rees examine the intersection of trauma-informed care and open online courses (OOCs) in their evaluation of teacher continuous professional development during COVID-19. Their study demonstrates how educators adapted trauma-sensitive classroom management techniques through distributed learning, highlighting the importance of "clear routines, supportive environments, and flexible professional development to address diverse student needs." They observe that OOCs can serve as both foundational platforms for continuous professional development and valuable resources supporting educators' long-term effectiveness in student support. The authors provide valuable insights for designing resilient online educational frameworks addressing both academic and emotional learner needs.

Enhancing Distance Education Resilience

Also situating their study in the COVID-19 context, **Kizil, Kizil**, and **Jang** contribute to our understanding of distance education (DE) resilience through their scale development supporting effective DE implementation during global crises. Using the technology acceptance model (TAM) and exploratory factor analysis with elementary school teachers in Turkey, they identify four critical factors: teachers' prior knowledge and experience, perspectives on Educational Informatics Network (EIN), stakeholder support, and technology integration knowledge. Their findings emphasize comprehensive teacher training and collaborative support systems as essential for strengthening DE resilience and effectiveness in elementary schools during global crises.

Advancing K–12 Open Educational Resources through Strategic PD

Continuing with K-12 research, **Arispe, Hoye**, and **Haynes** report findings from a longitudinal design-based research (DBR) study evaluating K–12 teachers' gains in awareness, use, and perceptions about OERs before and after the Pathways Project (PP). Their comparison reveals that strategic long-term professional development significantly enhances teachers' OER engagement, with training cohorts showing statistically significant increases in awareness of the 5Rs (retain, reuse, revise, remix, redistribute) and improved perceived effectiveness of OER for learning outcomes.

VR Versus Videoconferencing in Music Education Online

Moving to higher education in China, **Zhang** compares VRChat and Zoom as instructional environments for practising musical skills. This investigation of virtual reality versus videoconferencing platforms for Chinese folk music education on oboe demonstrates the potential of immersive technologies in specialized learning contexts. While revealing no significant differences in performance mastery, the study discovers that VR environments significantly enhance student motivation, aesthetic experience quality, and cultural nuance transmission in musical performance, particularly in conveying lyrical artistic aspects and intonation subtlety characteristic of Chinese folk music.

Academic and Non-Academic Support Services in Distance Learning

Yang's structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis of 1,234 students in China explores the distinct mechanisms by which academic and non-academic support services impact student engagement and academic performance in open education contexts. The findings reveal that student engagement partially mediates the relationship between academic support services and learning performance, while completely mediating the relationship between non-academic support services and learning performance. The findings suggest that DE institutions should focus greater attention on non-academic support services while improving resource allocation to create more efficient and logical resource distribution.

Enhancing Flipped Classroom Effectiveness Through Group Awareness

Encouraging students to invest more in pre-class preparation within FC environments is a challenge identified by ODL literature. **Lin, Lin**, and **Hung** address this persistent lack of student preparedness through their innovative "flipped classroom combined with group awareness" (FC+GA) model. Their extended experimental study demonstrates that incorporating group awareness tools, such as providing visual information about peers' learning status, can significantly improve students' preparation efforts and

learning outcomes compared to traditional FC approaches. The proposed model offers a practical solution for enhancing student engagement in FC environments.

Instructional Design Evolution: Systematic Mapping Analysis

Özkan, Çevik, Saylan, and Çakıroğlu provide a comprehensive systematic mapping analysis of instructional design (ID) models for online learning, tracing the paradigm shift from traditional content-centric frameworks toward adaptive learner-centered designs. Using Reigeluth's (2016) framework as a roadmap, this study categorizes ID models considering their applicability to instructional contexts within online learning environments. The findings present emerging trends emphasizing motivation, social interaction, personalization, and technological integration, offering practical recommendations for selecting and implementing models that align with dynamic learner needs and support future ID advancements.

Science Experiment Design in Online Learning: A Systematic Review

This systematic review examines trends in science experiment implementation across online learning environments from 2015 to 2022. Using PRISMA methodology, **Ubaidillah** and colleagues analyze 32 peer-reviewed articles demonstrating diverse pedagogical approaches to science experiments in ODL, including hands-on home experiments, virtual laboratory simulations, and augmented reality applications, with interactive simulations emerging as the dominant trend. Virtual laboratories are found to serve as crucial technology infrastructure, while experiment reports remain the primary assessment method across online science learning contexts. Unsurprisingly, the findings point to significant publication growth since the pandemic, highlighting how emergency remote learning accelerated adoption of digital science experimentation.

E-Books Versus Printed Books in Language Learning

Listanto and colleagues conduct a comprehensive meta-analysis of 12 studies to evaluate the comparative effectiveness of electronic versus printed books in language learning contexts. Their random-effects analysis reveals a medium positive effect size (0.5) favoring e-books, with particularly strong benefits observed for Arabic and Turkish language learning. The study concludes that interactive e-books significantly outperform non-interactive versions, while native language learning shows greater improvement than foreign language acquisition. Notably, e-books demonstrate positive effects on speaking, writing, and listening skills, though reading improvements appear smaller. These findings underscore the importance of developing interactive, culturally responsive digital learning materials that leverage multimedia features to enhance language acquisition.

Open Pedagogy Theory and Practice: A Critical Review

Jhangiani reviews the inaugural volume of a new open access monograph series exploring the intersection of open pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and social justice in higher education. The collection features seven collaborative essays examining values-based frameworks, implementation challenges, and practical applications of open educational practices across diverse institutions. Key insights include the transformative potential of renewable assignments, the importance of addressing digital equity concerns, and the need for institutional policies that support open pedagogical approaches. The review highlights the

volume's commitment to amplifying diverse voices while providing honest examinations of tensions inherent in open educational practice. This critical analysis offers valuable guidance for educators and institutions seeking to implement open pedagogy initiatives while navigating practical implementation challenges.

Collaborative OER Policy Development at The University of the West Indies

McGreal and **Hill** document the comprehensive process undertaken by the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus to develop an institutional OER policy through stakeholder engagement and collaborative design. Their mixed-methods approach included systematic review of 44 existing OER policies, online surveys, Delphi focus groups, and a three-day participatory workshop involving diverse campus stakeholders. The process revealed strong institutional support for OER adoption while identifying key barriers including copyright concerns, faculty development needs, and infrastructure limitations. Significantly, the study demonstrates effective integration of genAI for policy comparison and content refinement, with AI recommendations strongly aligning with participant-generated policy elements. The resulting draft policy framework provides a replicable model for institutions seeking to implement collaborative, transparent approaches to OER policy development while addressing local contextual factors.

Looking Forward

These articles collectively illustrate the dynamic evolution of open and distributed learning, from trauma-informed online pedagogy to innovative applications of VR in specialized education. They demonstrate how our field continues to address real-world challenges through research that bridges theoretical advancement with practical application.

The diversity of methodologies - from SEM to DBR, from systematic mapping to extended experimental studies - reflects the methodological sophistication characterizing contemporary scholarship in our field. The international scope of contributions, spanning authors from seven countries, exemplifies IRRODL's commitment to fostering global dialogue and knowledge exchange.

As we advance into an era of increasing digital and AI integration and consequent educational transformation, these studies provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers working to create more effective, inclusive, and resilient learning environments that promote learning and wellbeing of all stakeholders. They remind us that the future of open and distributed learning lies not merely in technological innovation, but in our continued commitment to understanding the complex human dimensions of teaching and learning in digital contexts.

Through continued rigorous, accessible research, our journal remains dedicated to advancing ODL while maintaining our foundational commitment to democratic access to knowledge for all. Thank you, authors, reviewers, and the IRRODL team for your contributions!

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