

February – 2026

## Editorial – Volume 27, Issue 1

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Welcome to 2026 and to another year of research publications in the world of open and distributed learning. The IRRODL editors continue to receive many submissions, and we are currently developing a special 2026 issue on educational change driven by GenAI and AIED, to be released in the coming months. For this first issue of the new year, IRRODL offers nine research articles, a book review, a policy note, and three literature reviews.

### Research Articles

*Evaluating the Effectiveness of Online, In-Person, and Hybrid Learning: A Case Study of Engineering Disciplines at a Chinese Technical University* offers research findings based on modes of delivery. The research of **Guo, Lagutkina, and Mamedova** indicates a statistically significant improvement in technical learning with a blended approach.

**Chen, Chen, Zou, Xie, and Wang** authored *Exploring Cognitive Presence in Online Collaborative Knowledge-Building: Structural, Temporal, and Social Perspectives*. This study examines three complementary analytic approaches: epistemic network analysis, sequential pattern mining, and social network analysis. Through the analysis of idea connection, temporal analysis, and group interaction patterns, useful insights were gained for designing and guiding collaborative and online knowledge building.

*Innovating Interprofessional Continuing Professional Development: Applying the Community of Inquiry Framework to Digital Learning Platforms* examines interprofessional continuing professional development for those working in healthcare. **Manganello and Aleo's** analysis of CoI and digital interprofessional education studies revealed four distinct adaptation patterns: communication tool convergence, evolving divergence in collaborative technologies, implementation gaps in reflective tools, and healthcare-specific adaptations. The authors use the findings to theorize CoI application in the design of online healthcare professional development.

**Chang and Windeatt** looked to *Usability Testing for an Open Educational Resource to Teach Language and Culture*. This study extends the knowledge of creating, testing, and developing open educational resources for migrants and refugees learning English as an additional language.

**Tobondo** examines *The Role of Open and Distance Education in Reducing the Educational Gap in Indonesia*, with an emphasis on differences between urban and rural areas. The study's findings apply to

the country itself and contribute to a broader understanding of the educational significance of the urban-rural divide.

*Analyzing Middle School Students' Distance Education Experiences in COVID-19 via Sentiment Analysis and Topic Modeling* contributes to scholarship regarding emergency remote education for children and youth. **Bahçekapılı, Kandemir, and Kablan** applied artificial intelligence text analysis to reveal that students valued the flexibility of remote learning but faced significant physical, technological and pedagogical challenges.

**Liu, Jiang, Xiong, and Zhao** conducted research in China to examine *How Task and Individual Characteristics Affect Students' Cognitive Load: The Moderating Role of AI-Generated Content*. Applying a structural model, the authors studied task characteristics, cognitive load, and individual characteristics of undergraduate participants encountering AI-generated content. The results reveal both positive and negative correlations, including differences found between the two genders studied.

*Multimodal Engagement and Sentiment Analytics in Health Science Education: A Learning Analytics Framework Integrating AI and Pedagogical Theory* contributes to the growing body of knowledge on integrating AI into online learning. **Fang, Mu, Xing, Chen, and Wong** studied two image-based data sets and textual data to produce a multimodal learning analytics framework that infers learner emotions and engagement.

In this Turkish study, **Ayar** used a mixed-methods approach in *Microphones on Unmute: Perceived Online English-Speaking Anxiety of Non-Native EFL Educators*. The findings showed a lack of perceived competence, troubles with online technologies, and learners' English proficiency contributing to the speaking anxiety when teaching online for these language educators.

This issue includes **Belawati's** book review of the *Handbook of Open Universities Around the World*, edited by Mishra and Panda. A timely print book with over 100 contributions by scholars and practitioners from open universities worldwide, the reviewer recommends diving into the chapters and furthering one's understanding of higher education openness, past and present. With its theoretical initial chapter alongside entries with empirical robustness and comparative themes, the volume ends with chapters examining educational transformations wrought by digital and artificial intelligence.

The technical note, *Regulation of Distance Learning Courses in Brazilian Higher Education*, offers insights for practitioners and those involved in policy development. **Reis, Monteiro, Bertoia, Klement, Prado, Dahmer, Rodrigues, and Passone** examine educational quality, accessibility, and institutional accountability in Brazil as part of recent regulatory change concerning distance education and higher education.

Three literature reviews contribute to understanding digital literacy and collaborative teaching, MOOCs for health education, and the influence of GenAI upon learning achievement. **Wider, Saad, Mahmood, Ishak, Aziz, Wu, Wu, and Tanucan** executed a systematic review exploring *Digital Literacy in Enhancing Collaborative Teaching*. Findings indicate that digital literacy is part of pedagogical capacity that best aligns with institutional culture, curriculum design, and ongoing professional learning. **Arslan,**

**Ata, and Kucuk** used a systematic review to examine *MOOCs Reshaping Undergraduate Health Education*. Given MOOCs' potential to support health education, the comprehensive literature review identified the need for innovative, practical implementation strategies alongside further research. **Do and Park** provide *A Meta-Analysis of ChatGPT's Influence on Learning Achievement*. Examining studies between 2022 and 2024, the PRISMA systematic review offers implications and directions for future research regarding the educational purposes of GenAI, including ChatGPT.

