

## GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

# Special Issue on Effective eLearning Practices

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This issue is a collection of experiences and research from practitioners and scholars actively working in the field of distance education. In many ways the articles represent the best of what is made by an academic community. The success of technology-mediated learning is essentially based on a harmonious combination of technology with effective teaching methods, enabling the deployment of innovative, authentic and diverse teaching and learning opportunities according to the various groups that exist in the educational institutions of today. These papers do not represent “the” e-learning model but provide a set of models describing the possible use of technologies in order to achieve better learning outcomes. This is the case of the first paper “Assessing the Effectiveness of an E-Learning Framework: The Portuguese Insurance Academy Case” that presents a new instructional design framework conceived to facilitate e-learning by reducing diversity in programs facing non-homogeneous audience. More than a new instructional model it presents a case study done in a specific context and which

lessons learned can be applied and re-used in other learning environments.

The second case “A B-Learning Methodology Case for Faculty at High Education” shows a more practical view of the technology-mediated learning cases that result from research and interaction with peers, and personal experiences that will lead to the success of learning mediated by web technologies. The evaluation of pedagogical approaches, i.e., how individual teachers choose to integrate technology in traditional environments, assumes a core role and helps in the decision-making process supporting the design of learning environments integrating the best from in-presence and virtual classrooms.

The success of an instructional model depends on students’ preparation to participate in the learning process. Thus, “Developing Independent Learning Skills for Postgraduate Students through Blended Learning Environment” discusses an important and particular issue that is the mandatory independent skills of the online students. Many students have problems in making the transition to the more

independent learning required on online learning processes. This paper shows a case study on how learning activities and technologies may be used to improve independent learning skills.

After examining issues related to course development and instructional design, the focus is on particular case studies in areas such as climate change and transfusion medicine, so often far from the e-learning field. The cases “Education Portal on Climate Change with Web GIS Client”, “Bridging the Knowledge Gap in Management and Operations of Transfusion Medicine: Planning, Policy and Leadership”, and Health Learning Practices in Adolescents Using Physical Activity” are important cases showing a way to promote the reflection on

critical issues and on the reutilization of the process. The reutilization paradigm is a fundamental concept for the sustainability of the teaching-learning computer-mediated process.

Finally, we, co-editors, wish that readers enjoy their reading as much as we have enjoyed selecting these pieces of work for them. E-learning can be considered as still being in its infancy but its potential and benefits will help to spread its application and use in all areas of knowledge.

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