

Message from the Editor-in-Chief

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In an era of globalisation, digital social networks, cultural diversity, and COVID-19 implications, and where the processes of access to knowledge are multiple and challenging, this journal recognises that education remains one of the most credible and central processes for access to knowledge. There are many neglected links between theory and research, and policy and practice in the promotion of widening participation in tertiary education and lifelong learning. This journal provides an important forum for the development of theory, the addressing of policy questions, and the dissemination of innovative practice in the field of tertiary education, specifically widening participation and lifelong learning.

This edition includes 28 articles with a strong theme of distance learning tools and strategies adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Articles from all parts of the globe feature, specifically interesting research from Namibia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, South Africa, Jordan, Chile, Malaysia,

The first article by Gillespie and Hopgood examine the responsibility of advanced practice nurses to translate research evidence into their clinical practice i.e. evidence-based practices, for the promotion of patient and population health. Their study resulted in the implementation of an active learning strategy effective for generating the scientific premise to inform students of the need to learn biostatistics. Budiman, et.al.'s study developed a Direct-Contextual Learning (DCL) model by integrating the characteristics of direct instruction and contextual learning, and improving the learning outcomes of comparative Fiqh in Islamic higher education. The study's contribution provides a new learning model at Modern Islamic University, that can be used by lecturers to impart student fiqh knowledge without leaving the lecturer's role in facilitating students through critical analysis of the relationship between Fiqh and the context of social life. The third article by Cartwright, et.al. investigated how the challenges associated with group dynamics in undergraduate education could be addressed, whilst still promoting the important contribution collective group assessments have to promoting skill development and preparation for the workplace. Their findings demonstrated that the structuring of group work process through the implementation of a Group Work Contract, can support the development of positive and effective group dynamics, resulting in reduced student anxiety about collaborative learning and perception of a better overall outcome. The fourth article by Thompson, et.al. considered the graduating student-preparedness surveys, that show employers claim an absence of key skills among baccalaureate graduates. Their important study describes procedures educators can use for developing a classroom experience integrating real-business world pressures, coaching, and accountability to better prepare graduating students for their careers and satisfy the skills business managers expect. The next article by Salih and Omar explicitly examined online teaching and learning promoted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as perceived by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students of a higher learning institution in Oman. Their findings highlight the significance of exploring learners' online

learning experiences, and its implications for planning, implementing, teaching, and assessing online language education. Similar to Salih and Omar, the sixth article by Khateeb, et.al. also examined the impact of distance education programs' effectiveness on student's learning outcomes at Jordanian universities. Their study reported significant differences between the respondents' attitudes which can be attributed to gender, and faculties favouring females and those enrolled in human sciences faculties. Joel, et.al's research interrogated the efficacy of Interactive video technology (IVT) as a common teaching tool, to describe the experiences of nursing students on the use of IVT as a mode of teaching General Nursing Science with a view to describing the aspects that affected their learning. The study identified both positive and negative student experiences resulting from the use IVT as a mode of teaching, concluding it should continue to use IVT but aim to make the learning environment more favourable for students.

The eighth article outlines Qassas and Arieqat's study that aimed to identify the role of intellectual capital i.e. human capital, structural capital, and relational capital, in achieving competitive advantage, specifically, education quality, flexibility, responsiveness, and innovation. Their findings included that structural capital and its combined components have a statistically significant effect on achieving competitive advantage. The ninth article by Le, et.al. focussed on East and Southeast Vietnamese higher education students who sought to acquire better writing skills in English in and out of academic settings. They found that if these students chose to study English as a major, double major or minor, they could gain a better insight into English rhetoric and composition, and accurately apply them as a multi-meaning sign to their future writings. The tenth article by Mpungose was motivated by empirical findings that reported that Grade 12 Physical Science teachers in South African schools still struggle to understand and contextualise curriculum concepts in order to redefine specific CAPS Physical Science concepts. Using Van den Akker (2004) curriculum spider web concept framework, they were able to reconceptualise Grade 12 CAPS Physical Science concepts for greater understanding. The next article by AlHarbi, et.al. investigated ego depletion and anxiety, and the relationship between the two, among the university female students in Amman, Jordan, and reported how ego depletion acts as a good predictor of future anxiety. Merellano-Navarro, et.al.'s study based at a Chilean university, used an interpretive paradigm to explore teaching in higher education by the actual academics involved. Effective teaching by these academics were characterised by a number of factors, including the establishment of good personal relationships with their students, and the importance of didactics in the learning process. The thirteenth article by Nasir, et.al. reviewed forms of racial oppression among Malaysian students in the business of their school and campus lives, and conclude that microaggression is on the rise among Malaysian youth, and this problem stems from the environment that has shaped their learning landscape. The fourteenth article by Msimanga used student-teachers' reflections to explore how participation in micro lessons developed skills which were key in the teaching profession. Findings included that student teacher participation in micro lessons positively impacted their teacher professional skills, including lesson planning, craft of teaching, reflective practice, time management and professional conduct, just to name a few.

Ghazala and Elshall's study sought to assess the application of national education technology standards, as perceived by nursing students and its relation to their problem-solving skill during COVID 19 disaster. Their findings confirm the importance of ensuring the application of national education technology standards for teaching staff and the administrative system in the form of periodic updates and training on the new changes in education technology, for both nursing students and teaching staff. The sixteenth article by Al-Dialah, et.al. aimed to build an attitude scale about e-learning among Isra University students in Karachi Pakistan, according to the item response theory (IRT) in measurement. They suggested that making a comparison between their scale and applying it to include other universities, to confirm user confidence about the validity and reliability of their scale by revealing the attitudes of internet users in university education towards e-learning. The seventeenth article by Khader and Shakra aimed to identify the degree of academic leaders' practices of excellence management, in public and private Jordanian universities from the faculty members' viewpoint. Their recommendations included giving more attention to the

Department of Excellence, especially in the field of leadership, as well as the inclusion of Excellence Management as a basic criterion of performance quality standards in Jordanian public and private universities. The next article by Nyawo explored students' perceptions about tutorial sessions during normal conditions, and under the COVID-19 pandemic. The study recommended that higher education institutions invest in the tutorial structure as a student support system, as it produces positive results in enhancing student learning. Additionally, regular redefining and reviewing of the tutorial support structure is central to improving the tutorial sessions' quality. Alshobaili, et.al.'s study investigated the impact of burnout on the academic achievement of female students in the colleges of health sciences in Saudi Arabia, and to explore on their educational levels of study regarding burnout. The study reported that only students of the College of Pharmacy experienced from high levels of burnout, but otherwise, their findings showed no association between burnout and academic achievement, and no relationship between burnout and the academic level of study. Elliot and Blithe's study applied a stress process theory to analyse the gender inequity, treating gender as a social status in higher education that predicts differential exposure to stressors and access to resources. Their quantitative findings and examples illustrated how these phenomena play out in individual faculty members' lives, and implications for how institutions of higher education might introduce change to address these findings are discussed. The twenty first article is by Rahmat and Yahya, and their study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Sufistic learning model in Islamic Religious Education, to improve students' understanding of these teachings in a substantive and tolerant manner. Their study concluded that the Sufism approach in Islamic Education had succeeded in improving the quality of religion and tolerance of students.

Kornosenko, et.al.'s study explored the ground conceptual principles of future fitness coaches' professional training in higher educational institutions. They proposed a model for the system of professional training of future fitness coaches, which contained four interrelated components of conceptual, intensive, technological and effective. The next article by Masuku, et.al. aimed to demonstrate the significance of assessment as a pedagogical and measuring tool to promote deep learning in institutions of higher learning. It analysed how different types of assessment could contribute to deep learning, while enhancing critical thinking and analytical skills. The twenty fourth article by Qi, et.al. aimed to promote teacher professional development in the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practice, by investigating the identity construction of eight ESP teachers from a northern Chinese university. Their study revealed that a majority of participants claimed a sense of achievement in their teaching of ESP skills and sustainability competences in graduates for the local socioeconomic development. Their study provides a new and innovative perspective on the issue of ESD development in higher education. Rodrigues, et.al.'s research utilised an innovative approach in their study of the Higher Education impact on student quality of life, by taking into consideration both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Al Rawahi and Yousef's study explored Omani and Kuwaiti physical education teachers' teaching efficacy level to determine differences in terms of gender variables. They found that the physical education teachers in the State of Kuwait possessed higher levels than their Omani physical education teacher counterparts, in all dimensions except in the areas of general teaching and classroom management dimensions. Furthermore, they reported that the level of teaching efficacy was higher for female physical education teachers compared to their counterparts. Ramadan's research into how using High Impact Practices (HIPs) in the curriculum will keep students engaged and boost their learning outcomes. The study concluded that the HIPs strategies allowed students to feel that they owned the learning process, that in turn enhanced their creativity, self-confidence, and self-efficacy skills. The final article in this edition by Thakur and Elahi, revisited the concept of thinking and pedagogy of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and emphasis on the use of the independent mind to promote focused ESP for students of the scientific disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). The paper focused on the primacy of the independent mind and thinking skills; the need to facilitate language development in a contextualized, integrated, interactive framework; and the ways and means to exploit the richness of authentic scientific materials and discussion-led innovative tasks and activities, to promote active ESP in STEM education.

I sincerely hope that the broad range of topics and information shared, are of benefit to our readers. Importantly, 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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