Introduction to Section II

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In addition to the special issue section on Advances in Cognitive Presence, this issue of *Online Learning* also contains a series of articles accepted through our regular submission process. These articles examine MOOCs, blended learning, online instruction, remote education, and the Community of Inquiry framework among other topics.

In "Fostering Self-Directed Learning in MOOCs: Motivation, Learning Strategies, and Instruction" Meina Zhu and Sarah Berri of Wayne State University join Curtis Bonk of Indiana University to provide insights into students' motivation, strategies and regulative behaviors in Massive Open Online Courses. It is important to note that MOOCs continue to provide students with lower cost and free opportunities for learning and that they remain very popular. In 2020, more than 950 universities provided over 16,000 MOOCs to 180 million registered MOOC users, the largest growth in MOOC registrants in a single year ever (Shah, 2020). Given all this activity, it is important to understand why and how learner participate effectively in MOOCs. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, this article provides much-needed data around the three themes noted in the title.

The next article in this section is "Implementing Blended First-year Chemistry in a Developing Country Using Online Resources" by Charisse Reyes of Monash University and University of the Philippines Open University, Sara Kyne and Christopher D. Thompson of Monash University, and Gwendolyn A. Lawrie University of Queensland. Educators in developing nations are increasingly implementing online and blended learning and novel approaches may be called for in these new contexts where resources may be limited. Through a mixed methods study employing a survey and focus groups, the authors of this paper aimed to understand student responses to the introduction of blended learning in an institution in the Philippines. Despite challenges associated with lack of infrastructure (electricity outages, limited access to computers), a majority of students favored blended learning for the flexibility, new pedagogy, and new forms of learning it enabled. However, a significant minority of students (40%) preferred the conventional face-to-face instruction with which they were familiar. These results suggest that progress in expanding access to higher education through more flexible modes of instruction will require institutions to identify resource challenges and address them.

The authors of "Simplicity is Key: Literacy Graduate Students' Perceptions of Online Learning", are Ann Van Wig and Shuling Yang of East Tennessee State University, Chelsey Bahlmann Bollinger of James Madison University, Xiufang Chen of Rowan University, Tala Karkar Esperat of Eastern New Mexico University, Kathryn Pole of University of Texas at Arlington and Nance Wilson of the State University of New York at Cortland. The purpose of this research was to determine literacy graduate students' perceptions of their experiences in completing literacy coursework when enrolled in online or blended formats. Using survey research, the authors examined 127 literacy master's degree candidates' perceptions before and after taking online classes, their confidence levels with technology, and about the technologies that impacted their learning. Results showed that initial perceptions of online learning changed positively after participating in online coursework and that course design influenced

collaboration and engagement. This research identifies some important considerations for the development of online coursework for literacy graduate students.

In "Development and Validation of the Online Instructor Support Survey (OISS)" authors Swapna Kumar, Albert Ritzhaupt, of the University of Florida join Neuza Sofia Pedro of Lisbon University for a study documenting and analyzing an instrument to measure forms of institutional support for online faculty. The study identified seven domains of assistance for online instructors in higher education: technology infrastructure; technical support; online course development and teaching; online instructor incentives and rewards; administrative and academic support; institutional culture and policies; and program and legal support. The study focused on two questions related to the development of the instrument including faculty perceptions of available supports and establishing reliability and validity measures for the survey. Results from a survey using the instrument with 275 online faculty suggest that some supports are more prevalent whereas others require additional investment.

In "The Challenges of Remote K–12 Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Differences by Grade Level", Nancy L. Leech, Sophie Gullett, and Miriam Howland Cummings of the University of Colorado Denver join Carolyn A. Haug of the Colorado Department of Education to explore a topic that is very relevant in the age of the pandemic. The study investigates obstacles experienced by teachers at various grade levels in implementing remote learning. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods with a sample of 604 teachers, the study found common challenges across levels and specific challenges within elementary and secondary levels. Common across levels were issues such as lack of student engagement, poor attendance and participation; a feeling of disconnect from students and colleagues; and a lack of knowledge as to how to transition online. For elementary teachers specifically there were even more struggles with adapting the curriculum to the remote/online format and gaining support from parents. This study provides insights as we continue to manage disruptions from toggling to remote instruction if there is another surge that requires a more aggressive social distancing.

In "Cheating on Unproctored Online Exams: Prevalence, Mitigation Measures, and Effects on Exam Performance" Jacob, John, and Barbara Pleasants of Iowa University investigate the issue of academic dishonesty in biology testing. As more faculty and students switched to remote instruction during the pandemic, concerns about cheating have become more urgent. There are multiple perspectives on student cheating and how best to prevent it, with some arguing for forms of teaching and learning that reduce or eliminate dishonesty by requiring students to demonstrate knowledge that is not easily captured on tests, e.g., through alternative forms of assessment. Others see testing as an inevitable consequence of the organization of higher education, with large numbers of students in introductory science courses—for example, which reduce the practicality of using more lengthy alternative assessments requiring customized feedback. The authors of this paper take the latter perspective and examine not only the existence of cheating in but also proportions of students engaging in academic dishonesty and ways to reduce these behaviors. An interesting result of this research is that despite finding evidence of cheating, the authors report that after implementing mitigation strategies and cheating declined, exam scores did not change significantly. It appears that cheating on these biology exams did not really help very much.

The next paper is "The Relationships of Connectedness, Performance Proficiency, Satisfaction, and Online Learning Continuance Intention in Online Learning" by Hungwei Tseng and Yingqi Tang of Jacksonville State University, with Yu-Chun Kuo of Rowan University, and Hsin-Te Yeh of Metropolitan State University of Denver. The authors of this study examined the

relationships among online student sense of belonging and acceptance; how well they perform the tasks that required to master knowledge, their satisfaction, and their intent to continue with online learning. Multivariate correlational analysis of survey data indicated positive correlations between performance proficiency, satisfaction, and four subscales of online student connectedness. The authors provide some suggestions for supporting these variables through online course design.

The eighth paper in this section is "Identifying a Gap in the Project Management Approach of the Online Program Management and University Partnership Business Model" by Swati Ramani Southern California University of Health Sciences, George Bradford of Keck Graduate Institute, with Shamini Dias and Lorne Olfman of Claremont Graduate University. In this study, the authors analyzed the engagement of an online program management (OPM) firm with the University. OPMs are businesses that assist institutions of higher education to launch new online programs and offer a variety of services including marketing, recruitment and instructional design. Colleges usually pay a percentage of tuition revenue for new students in the online programs so the OPMs are motivated to move quickly, launch the programs successfully, and recruit relatively large cohorts of students. Contracts with OPMs are quite lengthy - typically, more than five years – and institutions are encouraged to innovate business practices, such as increasing the number of program-related start dates. These contracts can cause significant institutional and cultural change at colleges, and they can present challenges at institutions that employ faculty with multiple priorities, such as at the research university studied in this paper. Using Activity Theory to attempt to understand the complexities of the OPM partnership, the authors learned that faculty were surprised about the nature of the OPM contract, that their own opinions were not considered, and they did not understand the business relationship. The authors provide advice to various constituencies about OPM partnerships.

The final article in this section is "A Meta-Analysis on the Community of Inquiry Presences and Learning Outcomes in Online and Blended Learning Environments" by Florence Martin and Tong Wu of the University of North Carolina Charlotte with Liyong Wan of South-Central University for Nationalities, and Kui Xie of Ohio State University. This study presents research on two questions related to the CoI framework. The firsts asked about effects of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence on actual learning, perceived learning and satisfaction as measured by the CoI survey. The second questions looked at the various elements of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence described in the studies reviewed in the meta-analysis. The study defined actual learning as a change in knowledge identified by a rigorous measurement of learning. The authors report that while teaching presence and *actual* learning were moderately correlated, there was a weak correlation between both cognitive presence and social presence and actual learning. However, there were moderate to strong correlations between each of the presences and *perceived* learning as well as satisfaction. The authors indicated that the results have implications for designers and instructors of online and blended courses.

We hope that these new studies provide guidance for researchers and practitioners working to better understand how students and faculty learn, teach and assess in online environments. Please read, share, and cite this work and consider submitting your own rigorous original research to OLJ.

References

Shah, D. (2020). *The Second Year of the MOOC: A Review of MOOC Stats and Trends in 2020. The Report by Class Central.* https://www.classcentral.com/report/the-second-year-of-the-mooc/