Introduction to OLJ Volume 28, Issue 1

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Once again, on behalf of OLC, it is my pleasure to provide a brief overview of the first issue of 2024. These articles cover a broad range of topics including engagement, academic integrity, faculty concerns, Massive Open Online Courses, and student and community issues in online learning environments.

The initial four articles in this issue are concerned with student engagement. The first of these is "The Role of Self-Regulation in the Relationship Between Adaptability and Engagement: A Case of Online Mathematics Learning for Elementary School Students" by Yoppy Wahyu Purnomo, Irfan Wahyu Prananto ,Yeni Fitriya of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and Amrita Kaur of Wenzhou-Kean University, China. Like this issues papers from the Philippines and Jordan, this study also investigates pandemic era online learning in a developing country – Indonesia. The authors indicate that the pandemic required rapid adjustments and adaptability on the part of learners and instructors. Working with 339 students in elementary school, they develop a model of engagement and adaptability as it applies to math learning, a particularly challenging subject, especially in the hastily developed emergency remote teaching environments typically implemented in response to COVID. Given the average age of these students was eleven; the authors also consider the role of parents in this form of distance education. The study presents and validates a model describing the relationship among adaptability, self-regulation, and engagement in elementary-level math learning while accounting for other external factors such as parental involvement and their level of education (with surprising results). The authors provide recommendations for developing environmental conditions that encourage online learning engagement through adaptability and self-regulation.

The next article in this section is "Students' Perceived Social presence and Media Richness of a Synchronous Videoconferencing Learning Environment" by Brandie Wempe, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Royce Ann Collins, of Kansas State University. Social presence has been studied in the online asynchronous environment, but the vast expansion of post COVID synchronous learning is new to students, instructors and researchers, a point that these authors address in their work. Another strength of this article is in the recognition of the complexity of the social presence construct and application of more contemporary accounts of social presence drawn from researchers such as Karl Kreijns, as well as the views of Community of Inquiry and communications theory investigators. The authors used a correlational research design to describe and measure the nature of the relationship among social presence, social space, sociability, and media richness with synchronous videoconferencing. Results support synchronous videoconferencing with distance delivered courses, which can assist with the reception of messages through multiple channels and increase the immediacy of feedback.

The issue of student engagement with online learning is shaped by the level of education in which students are enrolled. As noted in the previous study, students in pre-college settings have additional needs to engage successfully in online environments, often including the participation of parents. Generally speaking, this parental involvement requirement increases as the age of the student decreases. While online learning works well with adults in higher education settings enrolled in mature, planned distance education programs, all of these assumptions were violated during the pandemic, especially in the case of k-12 emergency remote instruction. In "Parent's Perceptions of Online Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic: The Road Ahead" author Tarek Shal of the Social & Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI), at Qatar University investigates these issues. Again, as many other researchers have found, this paper indicates that the hastily constructed distance education solutions developed for learners in pre-college settings in Qatar left faculty, students and parents with mixed feelings. While the majority of parents in this study felt that the school in which their children experienced remote instruction coped well with this sudden change, the parents experienced significant difficulties with balancing their own work and support for children, helping their children stay motivated (especially with multiple children in the home), and felt overwhelmed themselves. The author includes parents' suggestions for improving remote instruction should there be a need to implement it again.

The fourth article on the topic of engagement is "Using Learning Analytics to Understand K–12 Learner Behaviour in Online Video-Based Learning" by Eamon Vale and Garry Falloon of Macquarie University, Australia. These author note the relative paucity of research in k-12 online environments and highlight the promise of learning analytics (LA) to both optimize learning and the digital environments in which it takes place. The authors apply Chi's ICAP theory as a framework for describing learner viewing-engagement with video content, discovering patterns of viewing that both the LA data and questionnaires indicate as "active" engagement within Chi's theory. This paper contributes to LA research through it application of an established theory allowing for more precise (though admittedly tentative) description of what active video viewing looks like in autonomous course settings in k-12 online contexts.

In "Assuring Academic Integrity of Online Testing in Fundamentals of Accounting Courses by Elizabeth Whitlow and Stephanie Metts of Southeastern Oklahoma State University", the authors investigate academic dishonesty in online environments. They review the voluminous literature on cheating and plagiarism in higher education and note that, while academic dishonesty is common both online and in physical classrooms, the absence of any proctoring in high-stakes testing situation invites dishonest behaviour. This is a common concern in online environments in which some faculty use tests as a core assessment method. Though there is a longstanding recommendation to use alternative means of assessment that make academic dishonesty less likely, such methods can be more time consuming and less scalable than traditional testing. The authors note that in previous research in which online proctors or online proctoring software are used; un-proctored online exam scores are higher. They conduct a study that demonstrates this same result in two accounting courses. While acknowledging that the use of proctoring software can create a more anxiety-provoking environment, the authors report the same trends of higher scores in un-proctored online testing occurred throughout the semester. The authors assert that students would become accustomed to the proctored environment at some point and conclude that the differences are very likely to indicate academic dishonesty at higher levels in the un-

proctored condition. As we enter the age of artificial intelligence, concerns about academic integrity are growing, and this area of research will continue to be of interest.

The authors of "Instructor Leadership in Online Learning: Predictive Relationships between Servant Leadership and the Community of Inquiry Framework" Sally Meech and Adrie Koehler of Purdue University note that research on instructor leadership in online settings are rare. The frequently cited Community of Inquiry model suggests that instructor leadership is a core component of effective online collaborative learning environments. However, the model does not provide a clear definition of exactly what instructor leadership entails. Meech and Koehler argue that theories derived from the field of educational leadership, for example servant-leadership theory, can clarify this aspect of the CoI model. They note that Servant leadership is a values-based approach in which leaders prioritize the needs, goals, development, and well-being of followers, leading to outcomes such as increased engagement, satisfaction, and effective performance. The authors used a predictive correlational design to investigate potential relationships between students' perceptions of instructors' servant leadership (SL) and Community of Inquiry (CoI). Their analysis indicates a significant positive correlation between these instruments. The predictive model as a whole explained 66% of the variance in students' perceptions of a CoI. The results are significant, as extant literature does not offer clarity about the dimensions of and operationalization of instructor leadership in a CoI but SL does, so can help offer this missing clarity.

The next article "What It Takes to Teach in a Fully Online Learning Environment: Provisional Views from a Developing Country" is by Jessie Barrot, of the National University, Philippines, Joan Agdeppa of the University of Manitoba, Canada and Brendalyn Manzano of the College of Arts and Social Sciences, Tarlac State University, Philippines. These investigators note that while many studies explore teachers' challenges in online learning, there is a scarcity of research examining this phenomenon within the context of developing countries, such as the Philippines. They conducted semi-structured interviews with 17 faculty with varying backgrounds to gain insight into online instruction in this context, employing multilevel coding to classify themes from the interview transcripts. Their findings shed light on the various challenges that online teachers face and highlighted the importance of their readiness for fully online teaching, particularly within a learning context with poor internet connectivity and limited resources.

Also investigating faculty issues in a developing country are the authors of "The Interplay of Institutional Support and Faculty Roles During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for the Future of Online Teaching and Learning" by Samar Aada, Manal Ginzarlyb, F. Jordan Srourc of the Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon. These authors again note that research on faculty experiences during the pandemic is relatively limited, especially in countries like Jordan. In their study the analyse interview data with 30 faculty to provide insights. They identify roles played by faculty and institutional support offered to them that shapes and describe faculty emotions in response to the pandemic. They supplement the interview data with posts to the X platform (formerly Twitter) to further characterize affective states of educators confronted with COVID restrictions in the Lebanese context. The authors found that younger faculty and those more comfortable with technology more likely to adopt OTL and believe that hybrid teaching

will be most useful going forward; but nearly all faculty members— including those not comfortable with technology prior to the crisis—were willing to teach online in the future.

The next paper investigates Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). In "The Viability of Topic Modeling to Identify Participant Motivations for Enrolling in Online Professional Development" authors Heather Barker of Elon University and Hollylynne Lee, Shaun Kellogg, and Robin Anderson of North Carolina State University" the authors use a form of computational text mining combined with traditional qualitative coding to better understand why learners enroll in MOOCs. Understanding MOOC participant motivation is an important step in gaining insight into the high rate of drop out MOOCs learners exhibit and the authors tested several text mining and hand coding approaches to try to identify a method that reduces the number of hours required for manual approaches while retaining accuracy. They present results of a semi-supervised method that appears to hold promise in attaining this goal.

The final set of papers in this issue are concerned with topics related to learners and community in online environments. The first of these is "Comparison of On-Campus and Virtual Self-Assessment Outcomes for Incoming Appalachian STEM Undergraduates' First Research Experience" by Kristin Stover of The Ohio State University College of Medicine, Kimberly Cowley of Youth and Adult Education, ICF, Gillian Gaunt, Olivia George, Tuoen Liu, Christopher L. Pankey West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, and Kristy Henson of Fairmont State University. Increasing participation in STEM education and diversifying the STEM workforce in the United States is a widely shared goal of US higher education, funding agencies, and other educational organizations. The authors of this paper investigated an NSF funded initiative to achieve some of these goals in rural West Virginia. Students in this area confront financial hardship, limited technology and broadband access, insufficient academic preparation, and lower educational expectations. The students in rural Appalachia are about half as likely to obtain a bachelor's degree compared to the US overall average. The authors describe a summer immersion program to try to improve STEM education among this population in which data were collected during face-to-face versions of the program and a COVID motivated remote experience of the program. Unsurprisingly, the remote version, which was not originally planned, had some challenges which are documented here. However, there was some evidence that virtual approach had some benefits despite challenges associated with the unplanned implementation.

The next paper in this section is "Online University Students' Perceptions of Institution and Program Community and the Activities that Support Them" by Craig Shepherd of Memphis University, Doris Bolliger of Texas Tech University and Courtney McKim of Franklin University. While many researchers have investigated the development and benefits associated with the sense of belonging, trust, and shared purpose that community can provide with online courses, the authors of this paper identify aspects of this topic that have received less attention. These are important concerns given the longstanding research that indicates that both social and academic integration reduces student attrition. However, students' sense of community at the academic program and the institutional levels remain under investigated. The study concludes

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that academic program support is more important to students than social support, but there were sub-group differences that add nuance to these findings.

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