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EDITORIAL

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The Internet and Online Pedagogy Editorial

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Characterising the challenges of pedagogy on the internet is a very complex task. An interdisciplinary approach is useful when studying the educational process in order to present and represent the multitudinal bases that underpin educational change. We live in an era marked by online activity—or indeed hyperactivity. Thus we require pedagogical representation models that incorporate diverse educational values and include patterns of action that raise awareness of the educational dilemmas surrounding the innovative. The full use of the internet's potential, requires designs and demands of new training needs and analysis and must allow for the many technological trends that impact educational challenges in both the medium and long term. In short, whatever the case, pedagogy should draw on reflection and research to continue re-constructing itself.

Pedagogy on the internet is not necessarily a new form of pedagogy. It faces the challenge of understanding and effectively addressing educational challenges and opportunities by relying on its tradition in campus based contexts, its extended reach and the evidence provided by ongoing research. Today's pedagogy must coordinate and offer insights into these new forms of educational representation. It is not enough to offer a mechanical response based solely on technological affordances.

“Why talk only about the internet in education when we could talk about pedagogy in general?” This was the initial question that inspired the editors of this special issue. One way to address this task was to select studies that apply pedagogical reflection to the educational problems and opportunities raised by the internet, as well as to enrich this reflection with interdisciplinary empirical evidence.

The articles that make up this monographic contain both answers and questions - we introduce each study by presenting a problem or question. The aim of this format is, in addition to being pedagogical, to raise issues that open up educational debate.

In ‘Pedagogic dilemmas to flows of knowledge in the age of digital technology’, Ángel San Martín and Ángel García del Dujo launch their analysis by asking “Is there any room for pedagogy in an environment where technology already forms an implicit part of teaching design and development?” In other words, the process of educational appropriation of technological functionality calls for a heuristic approach to better understand the pedagogical dilemmas and affordances encountered in the educational use of technology.

Given the interest and use of educational technologies and consequent interest by researchers, it is often challenging to isolate the major issues that have been or can be addressed by academic research. Meta-analysis techniques attempt to build a concise map of this research terrain. In ‘Meta-analysis of research in e-learning published in Spanish journals’, Julio Cabero-Almenara, Verónica Marín Díaz and Begoña Sampedro-Requena ask

“What are the main issues being addressed by educational research centred on studying the different variables of e-learning in Spanish scientific production over the past 5 years?” That is to say, what are the most popular subjects for educational investigators in e-learning, what are the characteristics of the researchers working in these areas and which topics are yet to be developed?

In ‘Pedagogies for the open knowledge society’, Paola Ricaurte tackles the question “Are the structure and organisation of online educational programmes marked by a particular technical condition?” In other words, learning on an educational platform involves more than just learning using a neutral technological system, it involves models of representation of specific knowledge, values and action that must be visible in pedagogical models.

In ‘From massive access to cooperation: lessons learned and proven results of a hybrid xMOOC/cMOOC pedagogical approach to MOOCs’, Ángel Fidalgo Blanco, María Luisa Sein-Echaluce and Francisco J García-Peñalvo seek to answer the question “Can cooperation among participants be the pedagogical value that reverses the drop-out trend in MOOCs?” In other words, beyond the type of platform, the quality of learning involves other challenges than just good teaching and the efficient distribution of content in MOOCs.

In ‘Virtual empathy as digital competence in education 3.0’, Rafael García-Pérez, Juan-Manuel Santos-Delgado and Olga Buzón-García raise a question from the ‘dark side of the moon’ in online education: “Is virtual empathy a key competence to take into account in online learning processes?” That is to say, what are emotional skills and what role do they play in an educational interaction framed within a person-machine-person relationship?

In ‘The influence of the internet for pedagogical innovation: using twitter to promote online collaborative learning’, Maite Fernández-Ferrer and Elena Cano ask “How can formative evaluation be used to improve education?” The results of their research reveal positive effects on involvement, motivation and learning perception, but not on performance improvement. They suggest that future research should address the effects of self-regulating feedback.

In summary, this special issue helps us to understand teaching and learning on the Internet and as importantly helps us learn to devise more effective means to research the unprecedented educational opportunity afforded by these emerging technologies.

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