

Editorial

 **Panagiotis Tzionas**, Editor-in-Chief
International Hellenic University, Greece

JEL Classification: A2, I2, L8

Biographical note: Panagiotis Tzionas is Professor at the International Hellenic University, Greece. He has extended experience in education management and has served as Rector of the Alexander Technological Institute of Thessaloniki (ptzionas@ihu.gr).

1 INTRODUCTION

This is the seventh publication of JCETR (volume 4, issue 2), finishing its fourth year of publication. In previous issues, this journal presented original refereed papers, both conceptual and research-based, focused both on educational management and on education practice & research. Volume 4, issue 2 focus on furthering the journal's scope and consolidating its position in both conceptual developments and practical applications in contemporary education theory and practice through the publication of another seven quality manuscripts; in line with current trends and the pandemic crisis, most articles in this issue deal with covid-19 impacts on education.

2 PRESENTATION OF THE FIRST ISSUE OF 2020

The present issue of JCETR contains seven manuscripts written by nineteen authors and affiliated with fifteen different institutions and universities.

The first paper is written by Bradley D. F. Colpitts from Kwansai Gakuin University in Japan, Brandy L. Usick from the University of Manitoba in Canada and Sarah Elaine Eaton from the University of Calgary, also in Canada. This study aimed to address the central research question: how were the experiences of graduate students in a blended learning professional doctoral program changed by the COVID-19 crisis? The study adds to a growing body of literature on blended learning graduate programs. Action research was employed as the central methodology and leveraged narrative inquiry to elevate students' voices. The two participant-researchers responded to a series of questions supported by narrative reflections from their common academic supervisor. Emergent themes were identified in the data using narrative analysis techniques for coding qualitative data into themes. This was followed by a second phase of data collection and analysis after the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

E-learners' satisfaction as predictors of online classroom community, is the subject discussed in the second paper of this issue, written by Xi Lin from East Carolina University in

the USA, Yan Dai from Auburn University also in the USA, Hui Shi from East China Normal University, and Chunmei Li from Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, also in China. This study investigates Chinese college students' satisfaction with using e-learning systems and its influences on their sense of online classroom community in synchronous, asynchronous, or a blend of both synchronous and asynchronous online course format during the COVID-19 pandemic. A total number of 307 college students were recruited with 270 usable responses from a south-eastern university in China. E-learner satisfaction measurement and Classroom Community Scale (both with a 5-point Likert-type scale) were used as the instruments to investigate the research questions. Results of the analysis show that Chinese college students' satisfaction of using the e-learning system regarding the learner interface, learning community, content, and personalization positively impacts their sense of online classroom community no matter in synchronous, asynchronous, or a blend of both synchronous and asynchronous online course format. A well-developed e-learning system would enhance students' sense of online classroom community. Specifically, the user interface, interaction, content arrangement, and personalization should be focused on when developing the e-learning system.

In the third paper, Nikolaos Misirlis and Miriam Zwaan from HAN University of Applied Sciences at the Netherlands, Alexandros Sotiriou from the Hellenic Open University in Greece, and David Weber from the University of North Carolina Wilmington in the USA examine international students' loneliness, depression and stress levels in COVID-19 crisis and explore the role of social media and the host university. The move to university life is characterized by strong emotions, some of them negative, such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression. These negative emotions are strengthened due to the obligatory lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of this research is to analyze the loneliness, depression and stress levels among international students, based on the use of social media and the role of the host university. The research was focused on survey data from international students. In a total of 248 valid responses, we collected 171 from female students and 71 from males. 105 students are freshmen, 94 in their second



year of study, 27 at the third, 20 at the fourth and 2 students graduated last summer. The dominant nationality is the Dutch (n=62) and Vietnamese (n=37). Previous research indicates association among the use of social media, university satisfaction, and aforementioned emotions. The results indicate strong correlations between anxiety, loneliness, and COVID-19-related stress with university satisfaction, together with social capital.

The fourth paper comes from three authors in Greece: Vaia Papanikolaou and Yiannis Roussakis from the University of Thessaly, and Panagiotis Tzionas from the International Hellenic University. The diversity of political views provides great opportunities for sound evaluation methods in higher education, since these are defined, enacted upon and funded through governmental processes; their implementation is constantly subjected to political pressures –This paper explores how results are evaluated as intended to occur many years after implementation of education policy and what is the role of critical political institutions such as accountability and transparency. The authors present as a case study the evolution of evaluation concepts in Greek universities, through a 35-year period, characterized by the shifting of political power. These observations are generalized by the results of interviews conducted with an international group of academics. In this paper is also presented how the state political control shapes the context of QA in universities. Universities must have the courage to protect their core values, democracy, transparency, accountability and the creation of knowledge.

The fifth paper focus on exploring the relationship between academic integrity and students' mental health during the COVID-19 crisis, written by Sarah Elaine Eaton and Kristal Louise Turner, both from the University of Calgary, Canada. The authors employed a rapid review method to identify relevant data sources using their university library search tool, which offers access to 1026 individual databases. They searched for sources relating to the concepts of (a) COVID-19 crisis; (b) academic integrity; and (c) mental health. Research was delimited to sources published between 01 January and 15 May 2020. This search resulted in a preliminary data set of sources (N=60). Further screening resulted in a total nine (n=9) sources, which were reviewed in detail. Data showed an amplification of students' anxiety and stress during the pandemic, especially for matters relating to academic integrity. E-proctoring of examinations emerged as point of particular concern, as there were early indications in the literature that such services have proliferated rapidly during the crisis, with little known about the possible impact of electronic remote proctoring on students' well-being. Recommendations are made for further research to better understand the impact of e-proctoring of remote examinations on students' mental health, as well as the connections between academic integrity and student well-being in general.

The sixth article is a research note that focus on the adaptive leadership of social media influencers related to Covid-19; it is written by two authors in the USA: Rich Whitney from the University of La Verne and Kathy L. Guthrie from Florida State University. Social media brings the whole of the world right into our lives and devices. Sharing common experiences helps normalize our feelings of confusion and a loss of

control especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. This conceptual paper uses content analysis to explore two YouTube influencers, Randy Rainbow and Chris Mann, in how they produce content and provide adaptive leadership to the general public through hope and resilience. The social media influencers highlighted personify the adaptive leadership theory of observing from the balcony while interacting on the dance floor. Through the brilliance of their craft these influencers provide clever and entertaining messages of hope with alacrity.

The seventh article is also a research note that focus on the role of certainty in educational planning, amid the challenges to certainty posed by the COVID pandemic. This reflection is autoethnographic, based on theoretical literature from the field of organizational leadership, as well as the author's own teaching observations. It is written by Vachel Miller from the Appalachian State University at the USA. Over the past several months, the COVID pandemic has undermined and frustrated efforts to plan the future. In this paper a literature review research was adopted. The possibility opened by the pandemic is that organizational leadership can become more relational, fluid, and responsive; rather than relying on assumptions of certainty. To further enrich this argument, follow-up studies could explore specific examples and cases in which organizations have adjusted their assumptions regarding certainty, planning, and leadership. Insight identified in this article has lasting implications for how educational institutions approach planning and how organizations can cultivate leadership to be more resilient and nimble.

Based on the above, I trust that you will enjoy reading this new issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Education Theory & Research* and I look forward to presenting you the forthcoming issue next year, in Spring 2021!

Panagiotis Tzionas
Editor-in-Chief, JCETR