

Message from the Editor-in-Chief

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Higher education institutions continue to negotiate effective ways to embrace creative and engaging on-line learning pedagogies, so students can enjoy academic success. We continue to report many of the findings from on-going research into the effectiveness and impact these changes have made to student learning. Recognising the strength of academia and the challenges that plague access to a range of reliable resources, we need to ensure that policy-makers and educators alike continue to review best practices in order to provide the innovative delivery of pedagogical excellence. Higher education institutions are at the very nexus of career-focussed education as students seek qualifications to contribute positively to their community. We are proud to present this issue with contributions and perspectives from the Netherlands, the USA, Nepal, Uganda, Belgium and Slovakia. This issue has a strong focus on learner pedagogy, technology to enhance student engagement, and digital leadership adaptations. Research in these areas provide interesting and informative reading on how global educators continue with their core business of delivering relevant and meaningful education to their students.

The first article by Rietveld and Waalkens reports on a large study of students from the Netherlands who participated in extra-curricula boot camps, that offer an alternative to traditional education by providing accelerated learning experiences for students. Teachers take on coaching roles that guide students through their study progress and choices. Their findings confirm that ongoing support and a community of like-minded individuals are essential for success, and students' need for motivation and structured support in overcoming academic delays. The next article by Acharya, et.al., explored the impact of technology in colleges throughout Kathmandu, Nepal, focusing on both its benefits and challenges amongst the persistent challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to devices, and technical issues e.g. unreliable internet connectivity. They found that teachers expressed varying degrees of confidence and readiness in integrating technology, while students reported increased levels of engagement and improved learning outcomes facilitated by digital tools. Their research contributes to a greater understanding of the nuanced dynamics of technology integration in a developing country context, offering insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders, to optimize educational practices and ensure inclusive access to quality education in Kathmandu and beyond.

The third article is from Enock Kibuuka who explored how Higher Education Institutions in Uganda are facing a dilemma of ensuring peace, order, safety and tranquility within institutions, whilst concurrently allowing Faculties to exercise and enjoy their academic freedom without caveats. To reconcile these twin-concepts, the study deconstructs the concept of academic freedom and delineates it from freedom of speech and expression, and advocates for a utilitarian procedural academic freedom. The paper recommends a police-power-like institutional autonomy as a guardian role of facilitating faculty to exercise and increase their intellectual fecundity, whilst retaining the power to prevail whenever academics and students cross redlines. The fourth article by Cheng and colleagues explores the role of digital academic leadership (DAL) in higher education, as it is this leadership that integrates the portfolio of technologies and instruments such as e-platforms (webinars) and social media in academic settings. They employed a systematic literature review to clarify what is DAL and what are its core dimensions. Their review provides theoretical-conceptual and empirical contributions to the DAL literature, through synthesising the related theories and conceptual frameworks for elucidating the concept of DAL. Their result simply the need to enhance DAL in higher education contexts. The final article by Babulicova and Polackova focusses on the foundational assumption that cognitive functions should not be viewed as an individual's static or unchangeable attribute, rather that these functions

are dynamic and subject to modification through various interventions, experiences, and learning processes. They concluded that the activation of an individual's cognitive potential particularly in the context of their social environment, involves a complex interplay of factors that go beyond formal education, including tertiary education.

As always, we hope you will enjoy learning from our international academic peers through their work published in this issue. We encourage you to contribute your research findings to the IJHE journal, so others in our readership may benefit from your professional research activities. Wishing you all the best with your work.

Sincerely,

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