

Global Issues Spanning Higher Education

We are pleased to publish the first regular issue (Volume 12, Issue 1) of *Higher Learning Research Communications (HLRC)* for 2022. While the pandemic waxes and wanes, students in many parts of the world are returning or have returned to face-to-face instruction. It will take some time to fully understand the impact of the pandemic on higher education and what lasting changes will result from it. The Special Issue, *Education Technologies and COVID-19: Experiences and Lessons learned*, for which we are continuing to review manuscripts, should provide some insight into this question.

The HLRC tries to provide authors with a variety of formats for manuscript submission to capture what is happening in higher education. In this issue, we have introduced a new type of manuscript. We have added Higher Education Innovations to provide a way for authors to write about new approaches to existing problems in tertiary education that do not fit into existing categories. This issue includes one publication that fits this category – using appreciative inquiry as a framework for developing faculty quality standards. As a reminder, the journal publishes a variety of article types, including original research, literature reviews, research briefs, editorials and essays, and critical book reviews.

The present issue provides an excellent example of how we strive to publish research on higher education happening around the globe. It contains articles regarding research based in India, Africa, New Guinea, Canada, and the United States, reflecting a variety of concerns relevant to tertiary education. The focus of the HLRC is on digital teaching and learning, higher education and the public good, and the preparation of students in key 21st-century employability skills. The present issue reflects each of these focus areas.

Research Articles

- Wise Mainga, Reuben Daniel, and Luis Alamil, in their article *Perceptions of Employability Skills of Undergraduate Business Students in a Developing Country: An Exploratory Study*, sought to understand the differences in the relative importance of different employability skills for business graduates seeking initial employment among three groups: Industry representatives, faculty, and graduating students. Results indicated alignment and discrepancies in perceptions of the relative importance of different employability skills between the three stakeholder groups. Statistically significant differences existed in the perceived importance of communication, teamwork, and interpersonal skills between graduating students and employers. Evidence showed that employers were satisfied with the level of academic skills possessed by business students at the time of graduation. However, there was significant difference in perception between employers and graduating students on the extent to which perseverance and initiative and risk-taking were fully developed among business graduates. They conclude that acquiring soft skills and developing dynamic psychological-social capital, such as self-awareness, self-directness, proactivity, adaptability, and resilience, are important for new graduates.
- Viola Manakore and Jeff Kuntz, in their article *Replication or Reinvention: Educators' Narratives on Teaching in Higher Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, provide a qualitative analysis of the effect of the sudden transition from face-to-face teaching to emergency remote teaching necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic on post-secondary educators in Canada. Analyses revealed that educator

experiences were influenced by three main factors: (a) student engagement, interactions, and persistence in learning; (b) competence in the application of teacher technological pedagogical content knowledge; and (c) overall well-being of faculty and students. They conclude that higher education institutions should support educators in enhancing their technological pedagogical knowledge and in facilitating learning in various delivery modalities.

- V. Deepa, R. Sujatha, and Hasnan Baber, in their article *Moderating Role of Attention Control in the Relationship Between Academic Distraction and Performance*, examined the moderating role of attention control on the relationship between academic distraction and academic performance in 272 students studying at universities in India. Frequency of use of social media platforms did not contribute to academic distraction; however, consistent social media involvement does predict academic distraction. Attention control moderated the relationship between academic distraction and academic performance. Results can be useful for educators and policy makers to build strategies for developing digital citizenship behaviors among students and thereby leverage social media for improved academic achievements of students.
- Lazarus Nabaho, Wilberforce Turyasingura, Ivan Twinomuhwezi, and Margaret Nabukenya, in their manuscript *The Third Mission of Universities on the African Continent: Conceptualisation and Operationalisation*, sought to explore the conceptualization of the third mission, the involvement of the university in communities, in African higher education and the activities that universities are required to engage in and/or are engaging in to fulfill the third role. They used an interpretive lens to examine data collected from the documents of the African Union Commission (AUC), in which the third mission is both implicit and explicit. They found that the AUC conceptualizes the third mission as a role of universities, as a social role, as forging partnerships, and as being mutually beneficial to society and the university. Almost all third mission activities are anchored to the classical missions of teaching and research associated with higher education institutions. Their study adds to the limited literature on the third mission of universities from a supranational perspective. Also, the results provide information the AUC can use to revise the instrument for evaluating the performance of universities on the third mission.

Higher Education Innovation

- Ann Morgan, Rebecca Jobe, Juli Konopa, and Lyda Downs, in their article *Quality Assurance, Meet Quality Appreciation: Using Appreciative Inquiry to Define Faculty Quality Standards*, outline the journey of one online university to evaluate faculty performance standards, key performance indicators, and systems for quality assurance using an appreciative inquiry summit model. Using this retrospective business case, they show that the initial summit and subsequent quality appreciation processes laid a foundation for inclusive leadership and inclusive teaching and learning. Quality appreciation was observed to be a third component of quality enhancement that had heretofore included quality control and quality assurance mechanisms. Faculty quality appreciation is the integration of AI practices with ongoing evaluation and identification of faculty and classroom quality standards. Quality appreciation can lead to strengthened definitions of quality that are values-driven and founded in the heart and soul of the university's teaching and learning.

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Gary J. Burkholder, PhD

Walden University, United States of America

Editor

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5084-8099>**Erwin Krauskopf**, PhD

Universidad de Las Américas, Chile

Managing Editor

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4082-5758>Contact: hlrceeditor@mail.waldenu.edu**Submitted:** June 30, 2022 | **Published:** June 30, 2022**Recommended Citation**

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