Editor's Introduction

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This issue of our online journal continues our policy of providing a forum for research and practice in universities and colleges in the Gulf region, and sharing insights from a range of perspectives which will contribute to understanding and managing learning in this region. The issue includes four papers by Gulf academics on topics including student evaluation of teaching, online learning and teaching Engineering, as well as the latest in our series of student pieces *A course in which I learned a lot*, and a review of a book on team learning.

This issue of the journal is published using Wordpress blogging software. This will make it easier for readers to browse the journal and locate points of interest, and it also provides a facility for readers to add comments to papers in the journal. At the end of each paper you will find a Comments box; we hope that you will take this opportunity to respond to the papers (including this Introduction!). You may wish to add your own views on points made in a paper, to offer relevant examples from your own experience, to critique a paper or to raise further issues.

The first paper in this issue presents rigorous statistical analysis of data on a topic of interest to most faculty: student evaluations of teaching. John Morgan and Thomas Davies analyze a very large collection of student evaluations from courses across their university, in order to investigate the factors other than quality of teaching which appear to affect the evaluations. They consider variables such as type of course, faculty gender and student grade, and compare their results with those found in studies in North America.

In the second paper, *Online Information Literacy in an Arabian Context*, Janet Martin describes an online course used to promote information literacy among students. She considers carefully the skills which students possess, and the context from which they come. She discusses cultural factors which play a part in students' information literacy, and describes the development of an online course to develop these skills in a way appropriate to the local context.

University and college teaching are very much oriented to the teaching of particular disciplines, and Kasim Randeree's paper offers a perspective on the use of technology to promote learning in the field of Engineering. Drawing on his experience in a UAE university, he describes the challenges which he has faced in terms of students skills and attitudes, and shows how technology can be used to structure a course and to address some of these challenges.

The theme of teaching with technology is continued in *An Investigation into Learners' Motivation in an Online Environment* by Marielle Patronis. Patronis identifies various elements of motivation, and discusses data from the online component of courses aimed at students in the early stages of university study, which are designed to introduce them to university study and career awareness. Her data shows how students' motivation is affected by components of the

online course including technology, contact with other students and responses from the facilitator.

Our regular student piece *A Course in which I Learned a Lot* offers faculty a student's view of the teaching strategies to which students are exposed, and how they respond to them; learning strategies used by students; what motivates students; and how they interpret their studies. In this issue Maimouna Al-Alawi reflects on her experience of *A Course for Life*. The course in question is a health science course, and helped Maimouna to understand biological processes of life; but the title has further significance because she relates how the course relates to the rest of her own life outside the classroom, and the value which will have for her in her future life.

Finally in our Book Review section Susan Jones reviews *Team Based Learning* by H. Hills. Teamwork is a key skill for students in today's world, and yet relatively little attention tends to be given to understanding, supporting and developing this ability in students. The book review shows us a resource which could be helpful in this area.
I would like to thank all our contributors for this varied and interesting selection of papers, as well as the LTHE editorial group and the anonymous peer reviewers who regularly challenge contributors to refine and develop the quality of their papers.

We welcome submissions of abstracts/papers for LTHE - please see
http://www.zu.ac.ae/lthe/call.html for further details.