Introduction to *Open Praxis* volume 9 issue 3

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This third *Open Praxis* issue in 2017 is an open issue that includes six research papers and a book review. Fourteen authors from six countries (the United States of America, Sweden, Zambia, Nigeria, Mexico and the United Kingdom) have contributed to this issue, presenting their research and innovation in open, distance and flexible education.

In the first paper (*Metaliteracy as Pedagogical Framework for Learner-Centered Design in Three MOOC Platforms: Connectivist, Coursera and Canvas*), Kelsey L. O'Brien, Michele Forte, Thomas P. Mackey and Trudi E. Jacobson from SUNY (USA) present their study based on three Metaliteracy massive open online courses they have developed in three platforms (one as cMOOC and two as xMOOCs). They thoroughly report on the experience and analyze learners' active roles as participants, contributors and teachers, using metaliteracy as a lens. The discussion and conclusions are of interest to course designers willing to generate active online spaces and processes for learners.

Also dealing with MOOCs, Ulf Olsson from Stockholm University introduces teachers' perspectives in his paper *Higher Education Lecturers' Lived Experience of Going Public in MOOCs*. This qualitative interview-based study reports on the experience of 20 Swedish professors who have been involved in MOOCs. The paper focuses on five issues and concerns emerged in the analysis: being in front of a camera for shooting the MOOC videos, language (as non native speakers of English), being online forever, quality and intellectual property rights. It also explores the pros and cons of developing MOOCs identified by the lecturers, and provides valuable reflections and ideas for other professors and organizations planning to go public.

The next two papers refer to relevant aspects in the management of distance education – examinations and academic workload– based on two institutional cases.

In the first case (*Distance Education Examination Management in a Lowly Resourced North-Eastern Region of Zambia: A Phenomenological Approach*), Francis Simui, Henry Chibale and Boniface Namangala explore the way that decentralized distance education examinations take place in regional centres. Their interpretative study, based on Chaos Theory, collects information from both examination facilitators and students. It identifies challenges that lead to distress during the examination process, and the strategies put into practice to overcome the critical situations. The paper finishes with a set of recommendations that their institution and others facing similar concerns could assume in order to improve the examination process and thus the quality of their programmes.

In the second case study [*Academic Workload Planning for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Universities: The Experience of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)*], Juliet O. Inegbedion explores existing workload models and literature and undertakes a survey-based study, focusing on two aspects: the activities developed by academic staff and their satisfaction with those activities. After providing an overview of the situation at NOUN, she introduces a workload model and applies it in NOUN as an example. Finally, she suggests some recommendations to be considered institutionally with regards to academic workload.

The last two papers are focused on two course experiences aimed at developing soft skills among learners.

In the first one (*Developing Self-Efficacy through a Massive Open Online Course on Study Skills*), Brenda Cecilia Padilla Rodriguez and Alejandro Armellini, from Mexico and UK respectively, report on a MOOC on study skills originally designed for first-year students, covering aspects such as time management, information search or academic writing. They analyzed learners' pre and post MOOC self-efficacy, finding that MOOC participants improved their confidence in their own skills for success, self-motivation, learning regulation, endurance and goal achievement. So, the authors highlight the potential of MOOCs for improving learners' skills at scale.

In the second paper focused on a course experience (*Open Access Research Via Collaborative Educational Blogging: A Case Study from Library & Information Science*), Kristen Radsliff Rebmann and Camden Bernard Clark from the USA explore an innovative practice addressed to developing the skills of understanding open access and searching for open access literature. They do so by a collaborative blogging assignment in six distance LIS courses for graduate students. With a concern with the sustainability of the blog beyond the course timeline, the authors clearly describe the experience and highlight lessons learned.

Finally, the issue includes a review by Jennifer Anna Kepka of the book *Revolution in Higher Education: How a small band of innovators will make college accessible and affordable*, authored by Richard DeMillo and published in 2015 by MIT Press.

We wish these papers will encourage our readers to also reflect and innovate in open, distance and flexible education.

Special thanks from *Open Praxis* to the authors and reviewers who have contributed to this issue.