

Introduction to *Open Praxis* volume 10 issue 3

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This third *Open Praxis* issue in 2018 includes seven research papers and a book review. These contributions by sixteen authors from various countries (Canada, Turkey, Bulgaria, Nigeria, Pakistan, Australia/United Kingdom, Timor-Leste and the United States of America) explain their research and experiences in open, distance and flexible education.

In the first paper (*Exploring the Emerging Field of Online Tertiary Education for Refugees in Protracted Situations*), Suzanne Reinhardt from Simon Fraser University (Canada) contributes to the current concern with the situation of refugees by presenting a literature review and the analysis of three online education programs addressed to refugees. This critical review highlights different assets, weaknesses and challenges, and points out some areas for further study.

In the second paper (*Cheating and Plagiarism in E-Assessment: Students' Perspectives*), a team of four authors –Serpil Kocdar and Abdulkadir Karadeniz from Anadolu University in Turkey, and Roumiana Peytcheva-Forsyth and Vessela Stoeva from Sofia University in Bulgaria– explore students' views about another current concern in higher education: plagiarism and trust in e-assessment. Framed in the European Horizon 2020 TeSLA research project, they present a survey-based study that shows the different students' perceptions about cheating considering the mode of learning. The results provide a valuable insight as preliminary information to anyone involved in distance education.

The next two papers, from Pakistan, explore academic performance in distance education in relation to different individual dimensions.

First, Nauman A. Abdullah and Munawar S. Mirza from the Virtual University of Pakistan (*Entry Qualifications of Students as Predictors of Academic Performance in Various Degree Programs in Distance Education setting in Pakistan*), relate academic performance and previous qualifications and scores. Their quantitative study analyses the correlation in different Master programs and concludes that previous high achievers perform better, in accordance with similar studies. The results are of interest for distance education institutions in order to address average and low achievers' needs in pursue of better academic performance.

Second, Nabia Luqman Siddiquei and Ruhi Khalid (*The relationship between Personality Traits, Learning Styles and Academic Performance of E-Learners*), also focus on academic performance and its relation, in this case, to other students' dimensions; they include gender as a variable. Their survey-based quantitative study presents the results of the analysis and also some ideas for instructors, so they can create more efficient learning environments.

The following paper [*Employers' Perception and Expectations of Professional Competency of Distance Learning Graduates: A Tracer Study of Nursing Graduates of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)*], Dorothy Ofoha and Onyeka Iwuchukwu from NOUN (Nigeria) focuses on the output after a distance education experience. Information from both *alumni* and employers was collected and the study provides detailed descriptive statistic analysis. The tracer study concludes that NOUN graduate nurses are competent and gives credit to the distance education received at NOUN, which is a relevant result for this and similar institutions.

Monty King, Bernadete Luan and Esperança Lopes [*Experiences of Timorese language teachers in a blended Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)*] report on a blended learning experience, where a group of teachers have followed a MOOC and combined this online environment with on site regular meetings. Through a participatory action research, this qualitative study highlights some benefits of the experience (such as access, collective learning and motivation) and some challenges (such as Internet connection, platform and online course design and the cost of the MOOC certificate). The case study critically explores different elements in detail, and, as it happened with the first paper in this issue, alerts about the potential neo-colonialism that MOOCs and other Northern created experiences can represent when consumed in Southern regions.

The last research paper, by Lindsay Renee Murphy and David Rose (*Are Private Universities Exempt from Student Concerns About Textbook Costs? A Survey of Students at American University*), contributes to recent literature about textbook costs in higher education, particularly in the USA, and the role of OER in this scenario. The survey-based study explores the use of textbooks, cost, access, etc. and, through an open-ended question, asks about the consequences of the textbooks cost. Despite being a private university, the authors conclude that the results are similar to those found in public institutions, and suggest the situation as a driver for introducing OER.

Finally, the issue includes a review by Eric Belt of the book *Best Practices for Teaching with Emerging Technologies*, authored by Michelle Pacansky-Brock and published in 2017 by Routledge.

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

Besides inviting all readers to find some insight in this *Open Praxis* issue, we want to inform about another publication; it is the last issue in the journal *Distances et Médiations des Savoirs* [*Distance and Mediation of Knowledge*], where the editor, Martine Vidal (2018), compiles a selection of papers from seven journals focused in open and distance education, each of them introduced by the corresponding editor. *Open Praxis* decided to reprint the paper by Sandra Peter and Markus Deimann (2013, 2018); the motivation and introduction to this paper can be found in Gil-Jaurena (2018). We thank again DMS for the invitation to participate in the special issue entitled “*Seven sister journals, seven international contributions to distance learning*”, available here: <https://journals.openedition.org/dms/2395>

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