



## Editorial

### Exploring Changing Perspectives in Distance Education

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Qayyum & Zawacki-Richter (2019) report a continuous growth in the enrollment of students for higher open and distance education (around 23 million from twelve countries). The increase in enrollment is higher in the case of Brazil, China, and Turkey, whereas Australia, Canada, Germany, India, and the United States exhibit steady growth. South Africa and South Korea show fluctuating trends in enrollment. Russia and the United Kingdom show a decline in ODE enrollment. Zawacki-Richter et al. report that for Russia, demand for online education is growing [e-learning, blended learning, and flexible learning] while demand for correspondence education is declining, whereas, for the United Kingdom, it may be government economic austerity policies leading to increased fees for students. With a varying degree of the use of ICT different countries have experienced differential movement towards digital transformation, such as e-learning or mobile learning or adoption of MOOCs. Open universities are using OER (Thakran & Sharma, 2016), artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), Blockchain applications for various academic and administrative operations (Sharma, 2018; Traxler, 2018). Voice-based Internet assistants can be increasingly found to be used in classrooms.

Traditional and advanced technologies are creating opportunities for open and distance education to offer uber services.

Exciting times are ahead.

This issue brings to you twelve research, one book review and four focus reports on the events. These research reflect different dimensions of distance education in practice and touch upon pertinent issues, like admissions, student support, library services, learning practices and use of technology.

Xiaobin Li conducts an overview of distance higher education and MOOCs by examining Chinese literature for practices, challenges and opportunities. He notes that Chinese distance education has great potential with the use of ICT to serve the educational needs of learners located over geographic dispersion. To augment this objective, the Ministry of Education has established Chinese MOOCs and facilitated the mutual recognition of MOOC credits among higher education institutions. Promoting 'Internet + Education' and sharing of quality learning resources is another step under Education Informationalization 2.0 Action Plan of the Govt.

Bee Leng makes an assessment of document delivery and OER sharing services at Wawasan Open University (WOU), Malaysia.

She reports on how the document delivery services by the WOU library were improved and offered wider access to library learning resources through the integration of EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) federated search engine widget into Moodle virtual learning environment. Another impressive initiative of the university library is creating two open-access repositories on open educational resources based on WEKO, a Japanese open-source system. These resources are certainly beneficial to other institutions as well as these are relevant to the local context and at par with global standards. To keep the library resources relevant and well stocked-up, she recommends a continuous strong library-to-schools integration and collaboration in the context of new courses development or revision of existing courses or programmes offered to students.

The third article is by Lay Kee where she looks into the learning emotions of adult learners. Developments in technology and greater access to learning opportunities has enabled learners to opt for online education. In online learning environments, emotions play a significant role in one's learning experience. This has strong implications for course designers too. Positive or negative emotions during the learning process can affect the learning achievement. Course designer must pay attention to the attention and passion levels of learners. Lay Kee recommends the formulation of a care team to assist and support learner towards managing their time, stress and studies.

Next paper is by Nisha Singh in which she narrates her experiences about an Indian MOOC initiative, named Study Webs of Active –Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM). Globally, MOOCs became so popular that commercial and non-commercial ventures emerged. Many of the universities launched their own MOOCs. The Government of India developed SWAYAM as its own MOOC platform, based on three principles: access, equity and quality.

On this platform, the courses are designed and delivered through 4 quadrants – (1) e-tutorial (video lecture), (2) e-text, (3) discussion forum and (4) assessment. This is also being used for faculty development programmes under the Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT) scheme. Singh reports that SWAYAM is easy platform and can be used for offering all kinds of courses, especially teacher education courses.

Student engagement is an important factor in student success. A team of Emmanuel, Bhandigadi and Ch'ng examines the impact of student engagement on achievement in a blended learning environment. Open and distance learners belong to diverse backgrounds and have varied profiles in terms of their cognitive abilities, age and educational backgrounds. This diversity poses challenges to the open and distance education institutions in effectively engaging and supporting learners for their studies. The researchers here investigated the impact of innovative interventions like participation in Tutorial classes, Learning Management System (LMS), WhatsApp Groups, and Communication with the tutor through mails and telephone, and motivation and interest in learning activities. They report that Students' participation in tutorial classes, participation in the Learning Management System and motivation and interest, have the most significant relationship with assessment as engagement. They recommend designing well-structured courses based on sound pedagogical practices involving real-life examples for learner engagement. A regular communication, timely feedback, explicit guidance and continuous improvement in course content should be taken care of by tutors and course coordinators.

Duggal touches upon a very important issue of cancellation of admission of distance education students. Normally, a distance education system does not restrict admission seats and is a means to support mass education.

Sir John Daniel identified some large enrolment universities as mega open universities based on their intake capacity and the number of student enrolment. There are instances, where the students have to withdraw from admission due to various reasons. Such cases of cancellation of admission, if persists continuously for longer periods, becomes a cause of concern. Duggal in her study analyses the reasons for such cancellation in the context of the national open university of India. Some the reasons identified are: inability to make the correct decision, e.g., change of programme, ignorance about the open education system and personal reasons. In some cases, there is a provision of fee refund in cancellation cases. Duggal recommends for providing pre-admission counselling and continuous effective support services, to the students, so that the cases of cancellation of admission may be minimized, if not completely eliminated.

Technology is an inherent component of open and distance education system. There are various tool and technologies used for delivering open and distance learning programmes, which could be asynchronous or synchronous. Radio, television, computers, mobile devices and satellites use have prominently been highlighted in research literature globally. Kour in her study examines the impact of the teleconference for the nursing students and how the counsellors interact with students. She recommends greater interactions with the use of illustrations, video clips, animations and demonstrations, increase in the number of teleconference sessions and sending the teleconference schedule to learners in advance so that they can make arrangement to join them.

Next article is by Abanikannda, in which he examines the use of social media towards enhancing quality learning among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. Social media has a deep impact on various aspects of our life: the way we transact business, communicate, socialise, including education.

Social media platforms are no more merely a source of entertainment, they have transformed into edutainment and are being used in diverse ways in educational institutions. Abanikannda in this paper looks into the utilization of different social media concepts for learning by undergraduate students attached to public and private universities in Nigeria and if there is any difference in the extent of use of different forms of social media by them. He finds that 'Mobile Messaging Application', 'Online Social networking', 'Photography and art sharing', 'Wikis' and 'Microblogging' are among the most easily accessible social media networks. He also found a significant difference between the utilization of different social media concepts for learning by undergraduate students in both privately owned and public university. The reason that undergraduate students in public universities do not utilize social media for learning as much as undergraduate students in privately owned universities, maybe due to better infrastructure and Internet access affordance.

Ossiannilsson explores innovative learning spaces and next-generation learning spaces. With the right mix and implementation of space, technology, and pedagogy we can ensure learner success. Learning can take place anytime and anywhere and in any form, be it formal, informal or non-formal. The space (physical or virtual) can have a notable impact on learning and are a key element for empowering motivation, ownership and the joy of learning. She recommends an effective use of physical space augmented with technology-driven innovations to attract and retain learner and to improve their engagement. Access to modern learning spaces is now a sort of human right. Innovative leadership, strategies, and values are crucial to act as a change agent for innovative learning space which can contribute to students' success, motivation, and outcomes as well as the joy of learning.

Singh and Das discuss innovative measure to enhance quality in the open and distance learning system in the Indian context. Various facets of quality, like if the system is learner-centric or product-centric, what is the value of cost and how the system fulfills the expectations of shareholders, are pivotal to the success of the system. The authors point out that although the ODL system in India has been in vogue for around thirty-five years, there is a need for improvement in the quality of products and services. They have identified gap areas in the system and suggest a framework on the basis of some parameters of quality. The identified parameters are availability, accessibility, affordability, usability, learnability, reliability, durability, security, flexibility, manageability, serviceability, performance efficiency, sustainability, and scalability. They propose a quality framework constituting four components, namely assessment of the institution, identifying the gap areas, employing innovative measures, and implementation.

Oyelade explores the determinants of academic performance of undergraduate students of the distance learning center, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The performance of students is dependent on socio-economic, psychological and environmental factors. To investigate the determinants for academic performance, Oyelade adopts Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and finds that for the students of University of Ibadan major factors determining academic performance are: home, school, work and religion. He suggests that the students need to create time for both their work and academic so that these do not affect each other.

Dorothy in her article ponders over the effect of demonetisation on the distance education institutions in India. Recently the government of India has exercised demonetisation whereby old currency was henceforth ceased and new currency bills were introduced.

She looks into the financial literacy awareness campaign related to the use of digital money, online transactions and cash withdrawal etc. She recommends that the distance education institutions carry out their social responsibility in educating the public and empowering them to use the alternative modes of payment besides strengthening its infrastructure.

Pulist reviews the book titled, "Technology for Efficient Learner Support Services in Distance Education: Experiences from Developing Countries" edited by Anjana. The book gives a status of the use of ICT by open and distance learning institutes in developing countries, their best practices, challenges and solutions faced by them while adopting ICT for enhancement of support services.

The section on Focus Report has an overview of three conferences conducted in Malaysia, Thailand and Cyprus.

Professor Dato' Ansary Ahmed, Founder President, Asia e University, Malaysia gives an account of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) high-Level meeting on Asia Academic Collaboration which was held at Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand co-hosted by Siam University and Asia e University. They discussed greater student mobility and using Asian Credit Transfer System (ACTS) as an instrument for mutual credit recognition and credit transfer with intended universities namely, Siam University, Thailand, Asia e University, Malaysia, Punjabi University, India, Saint Mary's University, Philippines, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran, Our Lady Fatima University, Philippines, Daffodil University, Bangladesh, University of Surabaya (Ubaya), Indonesia, Build Bright University, Cambodia, RIMT of India, Tomsk Polytechnic University of Russia, and Ewha Women University, South Korea.

Professor Steve McCarty tells us about e-Learning and mobile language learning workshop as 11th International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences was held on May 2-3, 2019 at Prince of Songkla University, a national university in southern Thailand. The theme of the conference was "Global Digital Society: Impacts on Humanities and Social Sciences." Prof McCarty delivered a keynote address and conducted a workshop on e-learning.

Professor Dr İsmail Hakkı Mirici and his colleagues give an account of International Conference on Interdisciplinary Educational Reflections (ICIER) 2019 organized by the Near East University, Faculty of Education and Graduate School of Educational Sciences, was held at Near East University İrfan Günsel Congress Center, Nicosia. The purpose of this conference was to provide an opportunity for academicians and professionals from various educational fields with cross-disciplinary interests to bridge the knowledge gap, promote research esteem and the evolution of educational practices in different contexts.

In addition, there is one report on knowledge tablet used for technology-enhanced learning in high schools at Osun State, Nigeria.

The research published in the Asian Journal of Distance Education has been widely cited and referred to by individual researchers and organisations alike. SEAMEO INNOTECH, a non-profit-making education solutions provider in Southeast Asia based in the Philippines, requested to include a publication in their toolkit which SEAMEO INNOTECH has developed about alternative delivery modes (ADMs) for secondary education. The Toolkit intends to provide information about ADM programs and the various components, and how Southeast Asian education planners and implementers can develop their own ADM programs, adopt, or enhance existing initiatives for the secondary level. It shall be open to all and free to use after publication.

With July 2019 issue, we have shifted to Open Journal System (OJS) which is an open-source software for the management of peer-reviewed academic journals and is created by the Public Knowledge Project. This will ease some of our operations of managing articles and Journal.

We welcome new members on our Editorial Advisory Board. We place on record our deep sense of appreciation to the reviewers, it is due to your quality review and the free gift of time, which adds to the quality of research we are able to publish. Thank you!

We look forward to your advice and guidance on the themes that the Asian Journal of Distance Education would cover. We also solicit your support in enhancing the impact of distance and open education research with a special focus on Asia.

Enjoy reading the articles!

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