



Introduction to *Open Praxis* Volume 13 Issue 3

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EDITORIAL



ABSTRACT

This *Open Praxis* issue includes seven research papers and one book review.

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This *Open Praxis* issue includes eight articles: seven research papers and one book review, authored by 21 researchers from six different countries: Brazil, South Africa, Austria, USA, Turkey and Malaysia.

The first two papers present two qualitative studies developed in courses or modules taught at distance education universities.

In the first article (*Assessment, interaction and technology in distance education: a netnographic study at a Brazilian virtual university*), Edison Trombeta de Oliveira uses virtual ethnography to explore different aspects in the fora of a distance education *Calculus* course. He highlights issues of interest about three relevant categories in distance education: assessment, interaction and use of technology. The paper contributes to research about the dynamics of students-teacher interaction in e-learning.

In the second article (*Fostering symbiosis between e-tutors and lecturers of an English Studies module at an Open Distance Learning university in South Africa*), Thembeka Cornelia Shange explores the roles and interaction of two academic figures in a course: e-tutors and lecturers. She identifies some problematic aspects, such as lack of training of e-tutors, poor communication and non-aligned expectations, that difficult the delivery of the module. The findings can be of interest to design improvement plans, and also for other institutions that incorporate similar academic roles.

In the third paper (*OER certification of individuals and organisations in higher education: Implementations worldwide*), a wide team composed by nine Austrian authors –Martin Ebner, Sandra Schön et al.– starts from the Austrian OER certification experience and uses the OERworldmap to explore existing practices in other parts of the world. The study provides a description of the found experiences that certify the knowledge about the use of OER in higher education at an individual level (short courses, mainly). They report that the case of organisational certification is less developed. The authors provide an overview of the state of the art, and are open to extend the study and include other experiences about OER certification.

The next two papers are related to MOOCs.

In the fourth paper (*Systemic Tensions across the MOOC Design Cycle: An Activity Systems Analysis of the Adaptation of edX for Latin America and the Caribbean*), Fabian Freire complements a previous study also published in *Open Praxis* in 2020 and focuses on the tensions that can emerge in the five phases in the design of MOOCs: needs assessment, instructional design, production, implementation and evaluation. The detailed analysis can be useful for practitioners involved in online course design, to help them identify potential sources of incidences, such as the need for improving organizational processes or facing technological upgrades.

In the fifth paper (*Surfing on three waves of MOOCs: An examination and snapshot of research in Massive Open Online Courses*), with a more general perspective, Aras Bozkurt uses a systematic review method to explore the trends of research about MOOCs between 2016 and 2018. He identifies topics such as engagement, assessment and social learning in MOOCs, and uses a series of analytical approaches to provide visual summaries of the findings. The discussion leads to relevant aspects for further research and practice about MOOCs.

The next two research papers are tied to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on education.

The sixth paper (*A Classification Approach with Machine Learning Methods for Technical Problems of Distance Education: Turkey Example*), by Ridvan Yayla, Halime Nur Yayla, Gizem Ortaç and Turgay Tugay Bilgin, uses sentiment analysis to explore the presence of “distance education” as a topic in Twitter in the period March–December 2020 in Turkey. Besides identifying trends and topics related to problems in the use of distance education during the pandemic, the authors also advocate for the use of their analytical approach as a research method in other studies.

In the latest research paper (*Faculty Support in Higher Education Provided by University Administration during Emergency Remote Teaching: A Case Study*), Murat Sümer and Berna Yüner present a case study about the support provided by a Turkish university to its faculty in the transition to emergency remote teaching experienced during the pandemic. The findings describe both the support provided and the support needed in different fields: administrative,

academic, technical, social and peer support. Considering the global challenge that the pandemic has implied, the analysis can be of interest to other universities that share a concern about teachers' needs in critical times.

Finally, the latest contribution is a book review undertaken by NorHafizah Azhar and M. Khalid M. Nasir (*Book Review of Evaluating Online Teaching: Implementing Best Practices*). The book was published in 2015 but gains relevance now that online education has become widespread.

We hope this set of papers will be of interest to *Open Praxis* readers. Special thanks from *Open Praxis* to the authors and reviewers who have contributed to this issue.

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241

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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