

Introduction to *Open Praxis* volume 12 issue 4

Inés Gil-Jaurena 

Editor for *Open Praxis*. Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia - UNED (Spain)
editor@openpraxis.org

At the end of this difficult year, we present the fourth *Open Praxis* issue in 2020, which includes nine research papers and one book review. A total of 22 researchers from nine different countries –Portugal, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Pakistan, Fiji, The Netherlands, USA and India– in five continents have authored these items.

In the first paper (*Exploring the impacts of distance higher education on adult learners' lives and reclaiming lifelong learning as a human development process*), Claudia Neves and Susana Henriques, from the Open University of Portugal, present a survey-based tracer study about the impact of an online Degree in Education on the graduates' lives. The study serves as an input to reflect about the relevance of lifelong learning and its intersection with digital literacy.

In the second paper (*Tutoring support as a predictor of student retention in distance learning: The case of a University in Ghana*), Vera Arhin and John Ekow Laryea, from Ghana, explore a relevant topic in distance education –retention– through a survey-based correlational study. While they conclude that tutoring support does not predict retention, they use the transactional distance theory to interpret the data and identify different aspects of tutoring that may be of interest for other distance educators.

In the third paper (*Open and Distance Learner Engagement with Online Mediation Tools: An Activity Theory Analysis*), Judy Corinne Noeline Pullenayegem, K. Radhika M. De Silva and Buddhini Gayathri Jayatilleke, from the Open University of Sri Lanka, deal with another relevant topic in distance education: engagement with tools in a course. Using a mixed methods approach and the Activity Theory as a framework, they explore the low engagement of the students with five tools and the tensions that arose in the analysed course. The findings provide interesting insight for e-learning practitioners.

In the fourth paper (*The Influence of Social Presence on Students' Satisfaction toward Online Course*), M. Khalid M. Nasir, from Malaysia, focuses on learners' satisfaction and uses another well-known model in distance education: the community of inquiry (CoI) framework. The study finds a positive correlation between social presence in an online course and students' satisfaction, and the author suggests a series of elements to consider in online course design and development.

In the fifth paper (*Evaluation and Improvement of students' satisfaction in Online learning during COVID-19*), Fayyaz Ahmad Faize and Muhammad Nawaz, from Pakistan, report on the shift to online teaching that their institution has faced due to the pandemic. They focus on students' experiences and explain the process of collecting learners' feedback and incorporating their suggestions to improve the emergency solutions; these changes led to greater satisfaction levels. The experience may be of use to many other universities that are undertaking similar transitions to online education.

In the sixth research paper (*An Evaluation of Online Proctoring Tools*), Mohammed Juned Hussein, Javed Yusuf, Arpana Sandhya Deb, Letila Fong and Som Naidu, from Fiji, also explore an issue that has become more relevant in recent times due to the pandemic: e-assessment and the use of online proctoring tools. They have identified and tested different proctoring tools and present a detailed study of their functionalities, and include mock trials with the tool *Proctorio*, both with staff and students.

The authors conclude with a series of considerations, useful for institutions and practitioners who are planning to use this type of tools.

The last three research papers refer to Open Educational Resources.

In the paper *What About Reuse? A Study on the Use of Open Educational Resources in Dutch Higher Education*, Marjon Baas and Robert Schuwer, from The Netherlands, deal with and under-explored issue in the research about OER: their reuse. The authors present a survey-based study about teachers' practices in their country and report about different aspects of the use and reuse of OER, such as access, awareness and volition to use these educational resources, and dark reuse. The study provides an interesting panorama and considerations for further research.

In the next paper (*Impact of OER in Teacher Education*), Denise Marie Cummings-Clay, from the USA, contributes to the literature on comparative studies that analyze if the use of OER or traditional commercial textbooks leads to different student achievement. Being a finding of her study that there are not significant differences, the author advocates for OER and compiles different considerations in the OER adoption process, including the relevance of costs.

Closing the research papers section, AmberNicole Pfannenstiel, Alex Redcay and Daniel Albert, also from the USA, present another study focused on the adoption of OER (*Student Perceptions of Textbooks: Prior Behaviors and Beliefs Can Influence Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) Adoption Impact*). They explore students' perceptions using a questionnaire, and report on aspects such as cost savings or access the learning materials, but also about students' previous beliefs about, for instance, if they can pass a class without a textbook. This paper, as the previous one, contributes to the literature that, especially in North America, explores textbooks costs and advocates for OER.

Finally, the issue includes a book review by Ramesh Chander Sharma, who has reviewed the book *Teaching and Learning with Technology: Pushing boundaries and breaking down walls*, edited by Som Naidu and Sharishna Narayan and published in 2020 by The University of the South Pacific Press.

We wish these contributions will be of interest and use for our readers, especially in these times of COVID-19 pandemic, when research and grounded reflection are needed to inform institutional, pedagogical and technological decisions that many universities in the world have to make.

We specially thank all the reviewers who have collaborated in reviewing the papers submitted to *Open Praxis* volume 12. Their names and affiliations are included in the full issue and in the journal website (<http://openpraxis.org/index.php/OpenPraxis/pages/view/reviewer>).