Introduction to *Open Praxis* volume 12 issue 3

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The third *Open Praxis* issue in 2020 includes eight articles: six research papers and two innovative practice papers, authored by 18 researchers from six different countries: Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Tanzania, Turkey, USA and Mexico.

In the first paper (*Forty Years of Distance Education: Challenges and implications at the Open University of Sri Lanka*), Buddhini Gayathri Jayatilleke and Geetha Udayanganie Kulasekera provide a detailed and reflective overview of the history and evolution of the Open University of Sri Lanka, considering the five generations of distance education framework. They explain the evolution through the different stages and identify challenges and strategies put into practice during this period. Finally, they identify a set of strategies that could help to overcome current challenges towards the e-university generation.

In the second paper (*Implementation of Learning Management System: A Way Ahead on the Digital Journey in Distance Learning*), Sidra Noreen, from Pakistan, reports on the process of introducing an LMS in the teaching practice at the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). Using a qualitative approach, she explores both students and teachers' perspectives about this milestone in the digital transformation of the university. The identification of benefits, difficulties and challenges the study provides can be useful for the AIOU and for other institutions facing similar digital transformation processes.

Also with a focus on LMS, in the third paper (*Examining eLearning system self-efficacy amongst instructors at the University of Dodoma, Tanzania*) Joel Mtebe explores the reasons why, despite the spread of LMS or eLearning systems in many universities in Africa, there is a low usage of them among instructors. The mixed method –survey and focus group– study focuses on the case of the University of Dodoma and on self-efficacy as beliefs that can influence instructors' behaviour. The findings show how lack of organizational support and lack of vicarious experiences with LMS have a relative influence on the instructors' self-efficacy and subsequent low use of LMS. These results seed light to implement adequate strategies to promote instructors' use of eLearning systems.

In the fourth paper (*Determining needs and priorities of learners with special needs for support services in an open and distance learning context in Turkey*), Hakan Genç and Serpil Koçdar, from Anadolu University, present a two-phases study –interview and survey-based– that explores the needs of students with physical, hearing or visual difficulties, who have found in ODL an opportunity to access to higher education. The paper provides valuable testimonies about these learners' perceptions and demands. The findings are useful for establishing or improving managerial, pedagogical, social, technical and vocational support services at the universities.

In the fifth paper (*A case study of work-based learning through the design of edX MOOCs for Latin America and the Caribbean*) Fabian Freire, from the USA, presents a qualitative study about the experiences of a group of professionals who participated in the design cycle of edX MOOCs for professional development in LAC. The study explains the conceptual framework, research design and findings in a detailed manner, and concludes with specific recommendations for practice and considerations about the need to challenge the limitations of the pedagogical model that xMOOCs represent.

In the last research paper (*Academic Librarians Examination of University Students' and Faculty's Perceptions of Open Educational Resources*), a six-people team led by Lane Fischer, from the USA, present a survey-based study that, by collecting students and faculty perspectives about textbooks cost and open textbooks, has served to inform the *Utah Academic Librarians Consortium* about these topics, and thus help to identify the role that librarians may play in supporting the use of OER.

The next two papers refer to innovative practices in online learning.

The first innovative practice paper (*Academic e-tandems as a strategy for English language learning in a Mexican university*), by Dan Isai Serrato and Brenda Cecilia Padilla, present an experience between Mexico and the UK where virtual synchronous exchanges were used as a strategy to learn English as a foreign language. The paper collects students' quotations about the experience and highlights the benefits of e-tandems for learning and motivation.

Closing the innovative practice papers section (*If at First You Don't Succeed, Try Closing Another Assessment Loop: Implementing Online Co-Curricular Assessment*), Heather D. Hussey, Ashley Babcock & Tara J. Lehan, from the USA, presents their experience using the Theory of Planned Behavior to change the assessment plan in an online institution. They describe, in detail, the four loops in the process, which led to a protocol to engage all the agents (managers, faculty, academic coaches, students) in the assessment of learning.

We wish the papers will be useful at different levels (institutional, programme and course levels), and for different professionals (managers, teachers, librarians, etc.) both and distance education and blended learning universities.

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