BULLETIN

August 2014

From the guest editor, Barrie Todhunter

Welcome from the members of the ODLAA executive (renewed, refreshed and reinvigorated) as we rapidly head towards 2015. We hope you are having a productive and rewarding year.

Once again, I have the privilege of being the guest editor for the monthly ODLAA Bulletin for August. In this Bulletin, we provide some information about what is happening in the world of ODLAA for the coming year, plus some information on forthcoming events that may be of interest to ODLAA members. We are unable to bring you a bio of a leading educator in open and distance education on this occasion but do pose some questions to encourage you to consider nominating someone for a future bio.

As indicated in previous editions, we are happy to provide information about employment opportunities that may be available in the area of open and distance education as well as any forthcoming events, so please let us know of any opportunities or events that arise. Send any information to executive@odlaa.org. We also like to provide a review of any publications in this domain so feel free to let us know what is in press or what has been published, and if possible send in your review of what you find. This can help to spread the word among your fellow practitioners in the world of ODE. As mentioned above, we like to profile practitioners in this area so please send in any bios of yourself or of key members of your organisations so we can help to raise the profile of educators in open and distance education. If you would like to assist, you can send your views on these matters, information or feedback to executive@odlaa.org.

Associate Professor Barrie Todhunter
ODLAA Committee Member
University of Southern Queensland

ODLAA Webinars

Once again, Jo Osborne will be facilitating some exciting webinars on topics that are important to the future of open and distance education as the political and economic landscape changes around us quite rapidly.

A particularly interesting webinar on Social Inclusion Challenges for Open and Distance Education was held on 18th July with three speakers talking on diverse areas of expertise. Lisa MacDonald spoke about multiliteracies as a basis for inclusive communicative practices, Sherrill Whittington looked particularly at issues of equality of access and outcomes for women in ODL, and Susan Johns linked social need with enabling programs to university study and VET pathways. All speakers drew links between research and practice, and one

strong message emerging for us as practitioners was that while distance and flexible learning facilitates access to higher education for many it proves exclusive for some - for technological and sociological reasons in both Australia and overseas, for different reasons in both the developed and developing worlds. It's clear there's a lot more to be explored on this topic!

We were delighted to welcome webinar participants from the USA and New Zealand, as ODLAA webinars are now also advertised to members of DEANZ.

A link to this and other webinar recordings can be found on the ODLAA website: http://www.odlaa.org/

Watch out for forthcoming information on the next ODLAA Webinar scheduled for later this year. A provisional schedule is suggested here and we would very much like some feedback especially if you (or a colleague) have a particular professional interest in one of the areas and would be able to contribute as a co-presenter.

Provisional date	Suggested topic	Presenters
Early November	**Mobile Learning**	Offers please from educators and learners who have experience in this area.
	Possible future topics for webinars	
2015	**Blended learning – what does it mean and what are the implications for educators in HE institutions?**	Expressions of interest please.
2015	**Unlocking universities – breaking up HE services into competitive and contestable services**	Expressions of interest please.

The focus of these webinars will continue to be from a practitioner aspect; we want to share experience and advice from the field rather than propose theoretical positions.

If you would like to help refine (or diversify!) the proposed topics and/or suggest possible presenters, please contact Jo directly at Jo.Osborne@utas.edu.au

Conferences and other events

Please send through any information on conferences or events related to open and distance education that you would like to have included in the monthly ODLAA bulletin.

Have you attended an event in recent months which raised some interesting issues in relation to the future of ODE? If so, please send in a short (or long) article/comment/link about your experiences and your views.

EduTECH 2014 in June 2014
I attended the 2014 EduTECH conference as a representative of ODLAA, and sat in on presentations related to the Higher Education Leaders' sessions. Some brief comments on highlights from my personal perspective included:

- An early keynote speaker, Sugata Mitra, spoke on self-organised learning environments (SOLE) with a focus on collaborative exploration, encouragement rather than instruction, the 'Hole in a wall' project, complexity and the 'edge of chaos' which he believes is

where learning takes place. He placed a high value on the freedom from threat associated with assessment.

- Sir John Daniel updated his perceptions on the dimensions of 'openness' which resonate with members of ODLAA.
- David Barnett from Pearson spoke on their relationship and joint venture with Monash University to create the Monash graduate school online. Is this a model for the future?
- Sir Ken Robinson spoke eloquently and entertainingly on his favourite topics including a greater focus on encouragement of creativity, how existing models of school education tend to stifle creativity, moving away from current industrial models of education, the existing focus by governments on measurement of outcomes and comparisons of quantitative group/national outcomes e.g. PISA measurements, but with little focus on the context and encouragement of individual outcomes.
- There was a panel discussion on MOOCs with Mary Shiel and Gregor Kennedy from the University of Melbourne (speaking for the positives), and Sir John Daniel (speaking for the negative view in most cases). Sir John argued that to date the business models are not well articulated, and that the objectives for running MOOCs are neither well stated nor confirmed.
- Steven Schwartz talked about the Western Governor's University (WGU) http://www.wgu.edu/ with a focus on 'doing more with less'. WGU is an online university in the United States with a very open model in terms of enrolment and progress, and is competency focused rather than focused on set assessment models. Another interesting model which provides a window into the future perhaps for Australian universities.
- Gilly Salmon provided another interesting presentation from her unique perspective on the ODE world, using planetary metaphors including Contentia, Instantia, Nomadia and Cafelattia.
- Michael Gallagher gave an interesting presentation on the need for micro-economic reform of Australia's higher education 'industry', examining whether current policy settings are correct and sustainable.
- Alan Finkel provided an excellent presentation on his views of the future of higher education institutions, and discussed the future of partnerships with industry representatives such as Pearson.

Keynote presentations to be delivered by Associate Professor Som Naidu at the Learning and Teaching Conference at NZ OpenPoly on August 14, 2014 (abstracts provided below)

Abstract for presentation 1: Whakamārama (Enlightenment)

A desirable outcome of any act of *learning* and *teaching* is some level of *enlightenment* on the part of learners as well as teachers. Without this, teachers cannot claim to have taught anything to anyone, nor can learners claim to have learned anything from anyone. Enlightenment for learners and teachers may take many forms. In this session, I will explore two forms of enlightenment.

- First is to explore *open, flexible and distance education methods* including *elearning* and *online learning* as *enlightened* forms of teaching and learning, especially in the way they can, and do promote 'freedom' and 'justice' as articulated by Economics Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen. I will do that through these five lenses: *1) Learning from the back door; 2) Learning with the help of the organization; 3) Learning through mediation; 4) Learning to communicate and reconnect; and 5) Disaggregated learning and teaching arrangements.*

- Second is to explore the crucial role of *design-based learning experiences* in the design and development of authentic and enlightened forms of learning and teaching experiences. As part of this I will explore the role of notable approaches such as *design-based learning, scenario-based learning* and *problem-based learning* for scaffolding learning and teaching experience, and situating learning and teaching experiences within the culture and context of the learners, as well as the discipline and domain knowledge.

Abstract for presentation 2: Key and emerging themes in contemporary distance education

Learning and teaching in higher education institutions, especially in the developed economies, is currently undergoing considerable change. The major drivers of much of this transformation are the Internet and the World Wide Web. These technologies are enabling educational organizations to engage in all kinds of learning and teaching arrangements from fully online to completely face-to-face residential education. As a result, the traditional boundaries between group-based face-to-face residential and part-time or even full-time distance studies are being increasingly blurred. Modes of learning and teaching have been converging, allowing organizations to tap into different modes and student markets that were previously inaccessible or unavailable to them. Learners themselves are choosing to mix and match modes of learning, as well as providers, to meet their educational and training needs and at the same time, suit their personal and professional lifestyles.

The biggest game changers in this rapid transformation of the learning and teaching space are:

1. *Open Educational Practices* (Open Learning, Open Source Software, Open Access/Open Educational Resources, Open Licencing (Creative Commons);

2. *Innovative Pedagogy/Open Scholarship* (MOOCs/Massive Open Online Courses/Showcasing expertise, OER-Based eLearning and Course Design (Flipped classroom), Learner and Learning Analytics, Ubiquitous Computing and Mobile learning (Bring Your Own Device);

3. *Innovative organization models* (Cloud-Based Learning (e.g., OER University), Crowd Sourcing (Building Communities of Practice), Micro-Credentialing (Open Badging).

Key priorities in this transformation of the learning and teaching space will include:

1. *Promotion of innovative approaches to technology-enhanced learning, teaching and curriculum design* in relation to information storage and retrieval, communication and collaboration, and engagement and interaction;

2. *Support of engaged and participatory learning experience with increased online presence* of courses and with minimum standards for engagement of students online and options for digital assessment, feedback, mobile access and connectivity;

3. *Support of group-based but personalized learning experience* by providing opportunities for group-based learning in course curricula, including innovative approaches to assessment of learning in group-based contexts such as ePortfolios, and expanding the use of online and digital technologies to offer opportunities for collaborative learning and working both on-campus and from off-campus;

4.   *Support for open, flexible, mobile and digitally enhanced learning environment* by expanding the use of the campus, community and work-integrated learning/industry environments as valid locations for learning. Including increased digital presence of content and courses with minimum standards for utilizing the affordances of digital technologies, and use of Open Educational Practices through developing our own open educational resources and utilizing those developed by others to transform and improve learning resources for our students.

Profile of an open and distance education practitioner

This month, there is no profile unfortunately so we seek your assistance in identifying suitable and interesting people in the field of open and distance education.

- Who are the key players in Australia at present, or even globally. Tell us your most admired educator in ODE.
- Who is currently setting the agenda for ODE as the boundaries between open, distance, flexible and online education become blurred?
- Have MOOCs really stirred the waters of ODE and what will we see when the waters settle again? The editorial team for Distance Education recently tackled this theme and it makes interesting reading.
- Does the federal government really see distance education as a cheaper alternative with a reduction in university fees for off-campus students? Who is tackling this possible challenge to the ODE model and what will it mean for all of us in this field?
- Who will become the champion of ODE in Australia as we move into the next chapter of ODE in the tertiary field?
- And who is championing ODE in the non-university sector? ODLAA is poorly represented in the vocational and industry sectors at present?

Call for papers for special themed issue of Distance Education for Volume 36/2, May 2015

For information on the ODLAA journal Distance Education and the call for papers, see
http://explore.tandfonline.com/cfp/ed/call-for-papers/cdie-cfp-deadline-15th-august-2014

Distance Education and Time: Instructional and organizational implications for managing time, workload, and costs

Call for papers
Drs Elena Barberà, Thomas Hülsmann and Jennifer Roberts (Guest Editors) invite contributions to the special themed issue of *"Distance Education", Volume 36/2,* which will be published in May 2015.

Focus of special theme
While time, as in learning time and teacher workload, seems critical in most forms of distance education (including higher education, open schooling or non-formal education), it has rarely been examined in a comprehensive manner. The journal *Distance Education* seeks to address this gap by inviting contributions to a special issue

on the theme *"Distance Education and Time: Instructional and organizational implications for managing time, workload, and costs"*.

Scope and types of papers sought

The figure below summarises the issues and questions that will be addressed by this themed issue.
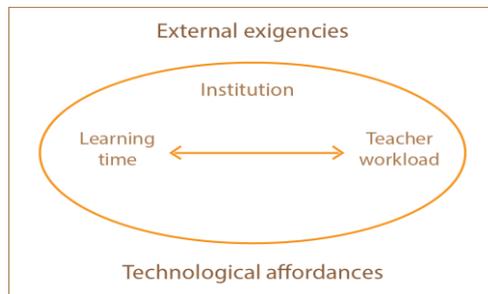
Learner time

- Many distance learners are part-time learners who choose this mode of study because of the flexibility it affords. The time budget of such learners (divided between leisure, family, work, and study) is limited. Are the time-allocations specified for the courses offered manageable? What are the competencies in time management that students need for effective and efficient learning?
- What do we know about the effectiveness of learning tasks such as *attending, investigating, discussing, practising, articulating,* as well as the time implications of employing media/technologies in these tasks? What do we know about the effectiveness of *student-teacher interaction, student-student interaction and student-content interaction*? What time should be given for student-teacher interaction? Does student-teacher interaction add to a learner's workload? Should student participation be made mandatory? What are the time implications of these approaches?

Teacher workload

- In distance education the teaching function is disaggregated into different roles (researcher, course designer, tutor, teaching assistant, coach, technical assistant, etc.). How are the different roles remunerated? How does remuneration affect the cost structure of teaching?
- To what extent is time allocation contractually specified (e.g. time for research, teaching, administration)? Are such specifications realistic? How do teachers distribute their instructional time? How much time does course development take? Can it be significantly reduced by using OERs (and RLOs)? To what extent is teacher time absorbed by assessment? To what extent can assessment be automated? Are there forms of assessment which could reduce teacher workload?
- Does institutional dependence on scale economies curtail student teacher interaction even where it is perceived as a quality indicator? How does class size impact on teacher time and work load?

Institutional arrangements/organizational implications

- Do current teaching workload models adequately and equitably recognize the time needed for quality teaching? How is teaching compared to research valued? How is this reflected in remuneration and institutional performance indicators?
- What systems and instruments can be used to monitor and solve teachers' and/or learners' workload problems? One of the major instruments of monitoring workloads is

the worksheet which is also used for activity based costing (ABC). How can such instruments help in solving workload problems, and to what extent do they compound workload problems through increased administrative work? Are there institutional structures for staff development on how to use technologies efficiently in order to implement institutional goals?

Technological affordances
- Digital technologies can increase or reduce workload. They can also be used to support interaction, both between student and teacher and among students. Student teacher interaction, in particular, contributes to the variable cost per student and hence could possibly erode the much needed scale economies. To what extent are digital technologies used as a productivity tool (i.e. reducing teacher workload per student), or as a quality tool (i.e. for increased student teacher interaction where this form of interaction is perceived as enhancing teaching quality)?
- How does computer marked assignments, quizzes, e-portfolios or peer assessment impact on teacher workload? More efficient assessment methods, at least for formative assessment, may free teacher time for other tasks. For example, blending automatically graded quizzes with learning analytics may allow more targeted interventions which would not erode scale economies.
- Internal reallocation of time may lead to falling standards (grade creep). How is quality monitored and maintained within an institution?

Guest Editors

Elena Barbera, PhD (ebarbera@uoc.edu), is Research and PhD Program Director at the eLearn Center at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain where she leads e-DUS group (e-Distance Education in Universities and Schools) which has since 1996 launched more than twenty national and international funded projects and produced about a hundred publications. Her research is focused on e-assessment, learning strategies, teaching and learning processes in online contexts, and time factors in e-learning.

Thomas Hülsmann, PhD (huelstmg@unisa.ac.za) is a Visiting Researcher at the University of South Africa. Thomas received a MSc Mathematics from the University of Bielefeld, a MA (Education and International Development) from the IoE London and a PhD from Oldenburg University. After working in several African countries, Thomas worked in Cambridge, UK as a Research Officer for the International Research Foundation for Open Learning. He has been Director (on the Oldenburg side) of the *Master of Distance Education and eLearning* program (a program jointly offered by the University of Maryland University College and the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg).

Jennifer Roberts, PhD (buckjj@unisa.ac.za) is a senior researcher at the Institute for Open and Distance Learning at the University of South Africa. She has undergraduate qualifications in Statistics and Sociology, a Masters degree in Tourism Development and Management, and a D. Lit. et Phil. Dr Roberts is the first South African to be elected to the executive committee of the *Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA)*.

How and when to submit the initial call for proposals and in what form?

15 August 2014	1-page submissions (for articles, reflections and reports) due to **Dr Jenny Roberts <buckjj@unisa.ac.za>.**
30 August 2014	Review of all proposals and authors notified of accepted proposals.

Your one page expression of interest should indicate the working title of your paper, an explanation of how the work relates to the proposed theme, the type of paper including an outline of its methodology, and the names and affiliation of the authors. The expression of interest to contribute to this themed issue should be sent to **Dr Jenny Roberts buckjj@unisa.ac.za on or before 15 August 2014**.

ODLAA Executive Committee

ODLAA is managed by an Executive Committee elected every two years from ODLAA members. Elections were recently held as required by the constitution for half of the committee to provide continuity and to refresh the direction where members want to take ODLAA in the future. The current executive is as follows:

- **President and Executive Editor,** *Distance Education*: Associate Professor Som Naidu, Monash University
- **Vice-president:** Dr Mutuota Kigotho, University of New England
- **Treasurer:** Mr Shane Moore, Federation University
- **Secretary:** Sherrill Whittington, Member of the National Committee of UN Women Australia
- **Publications Officer:** Antonina Petrolito, editing and educational design
- **Committee Member:** Diane Hockridge, Ridley College, Melbourne.
- **Committee Member:** Jo Osborne, University of Tasmania
- **Committee Member:** Mr Stephen Relf, Charles Sturt University
- **Committee Member:** Dr Jennifer Roberts, Institute for Open and Distance Learning (IODL) at the University of South Africa
- **Committee Member:** Associate Professor Barrie Todhunter, University of Southern Queensland
- **Executive Officer:** Joanne Scott

Communications with members of the executive committee can be sent via the Executive Officer, Joanne Scott, at executive@odlaa.org.