

GUEST EDITORIAL

From a Distance...

Welcome to a few words from your Guest Editor, fellow inhabitants of the third planet from the sun. We offer you a little treat for your computer sore eyes and your typing and texting fingers. We want to share, across cyberspace, not our differences, oh no, but a few of our similarities and understandings as aspirational educators.

Where is the Middle and where is the East when we're all online and in cyberspace? Well our articles here take you a little way towards a 'third culture', a bridge across forever, of our very own, including and encompassing concepts of Middleness and Easterlyness coming from global and cross boundaries educators. (Don't reach for your dictionaries. I think I just made up at least one of those words!). Of course it's about technology too...which of us can now talk about openness and distance in education without a mention of the technological mediator and its human cousin, an e-moderator?

First, our pilot of the airways, Dr. Gulsun Kurubacak taps into our creativity in the use of radio. We revisit our roots with a new slant. And why not... a much ignored medium by formal educators in my view.

Next to arrive is a fabulous exploration of the cultural nature of Wenger and his mates from Dr. Mark LAMONTAGNE, newly in from Ontario. He shows us there's nothing so practical and demanding as a good theory firmly explored in context. A superb empirical and well observed study of interest to everyone wishing to operate with sensitivity in Arab environments.

Can I now tempt you global travellers towards some writing from a leader of our distance travelling space ship, exploring the projects and processes to which many aspire? Dr. Takeshi Utsumi looks towards tapping into political work for promotion of serious purposeful globalness as we all spin around in space and the cyberworld. What an inspiration! Do take a read. Next to arrive is an article from someone I've actually met in person. You remember, face to face, in the same room! Tony Churchill works tirelessly on staff development and e-learning in my own University at Leicester so I have to admit we see each other sometimes in the classroom, corridor or lift! Still I know you'll find his article fascinating. He gives lecturers a taste of their own medicine...working in remote and entirely online processes. Take a look; I know you'll want to try it for yourself!

And last but not least as swirl around in our complex and abstract spaces, is Cengiz Hakan AYDIN. He is an educator after my own heart and insists that the idea of 'presence', i.e. 'being there' is the key to understanding the teaching and e-moderating role in online educational environments. In my own work I know this is a major success factor. Focus your laser beam in there!

So colleagues and travellers, of course this is merely the beginning of the voyage. Thanks very much from me for the incredible effort and sharing by all 5 authors, and to my co-editors for their support and patience. Please feel free to e mail any of them or me for more information. I'd like to hear your views and ideas too. And of course thanks to TODJE for giving us this opportunity to go the distance.

Dr. Gilly Salmon

July 2005, late at night in a stormy summer London, UK.