

THE TURKISH JOURNAL ON ONLINE EDUCATION: A Content Analysis

Colin LATCHEM
Open learning consultant,
AUSTRALIA

ABSTRACT

As the "Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education" approaches its tenth year, it seemed appropriate to assess to what extent its original goals had been achieved by conducting a content analysis of the Notes for Editors¹ and articles in the issues of appearing between January 2000 and October 2008. The analysis involved determining the articles' countries of origin, sectors represented, and focus and frequency of the topics covered. It was found that the majority of articles were from Asian countries, with Turkey providing the greatest number of contributions. There were also many papers from the Middle East, Africa, South America, USA, Eastern and Western Europe, and Australia. These articles covered a very wide range of topics and while the quality varied, there has been a appreciable improvement in the research and reporting since the journal's inception. Some of the papers, presenting non-Western perspectives, are particularly illuminating. The earlier articles tended to be descriptive or theoretical, but the more recent papers have been quantitative-experimental and qualitative-descriptive studies into distance education and e-learning needs, policies, procedures, practices and outcomes. Overall, the papers reveal a greater concern for teaching and learning than the technology *per se*. Some conclusions were drawn on the achievements of TOJDE and some possible future directions for the journal.

Keywords: Scholarly publishing, scholarly journal, open access, tojde, Anadolu university, Turkey, distance education.

INTRODUCTION

In the inaugural edition of the "Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education" or TOJDE, the Editor in Chief, Professor Ugur Demiray of Anadolu University, stated that the journal would be scholarly and international in scope, and would open up new channels of communication on distance education in North Africa, the Middle East, the New Turkic Republics, Eastern Europe and the Baltic Republics. As TOJDE approaches its tenth year of publication, it seemed appropriate to assess the extent to which these goals had been met by conducting a content analysis of the 342 Notes for Editors and articles appearing in the 32 issues of TODJE between January 2000 and October 2008. The analysis involved determining the papers' countries of origin, sectors represented and focus and frequency of the topics. In the light of the findings, some conclusions were drawn on the achievements of TOJDE and some possible future directions for the journal.

The following paper was unsolicited, but additional data were requested from the Editor-in Chief.

THE TOJDE READERSHIP

TOJDE was launched in January 2000, but the counter and web analyzing components were only added in early February, so there were no data for the number of hits in its first month. However, there were 177 hits in February, 318 in May 318, and in the ensuing months the number of hits went on doubling and in some cases tripling so that by December there had been a total of 5279 hits. Understandably, the greatest number of hits - 1,325 – was from Turkey. However, in its first year, TOJDE was also accessed by readers in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the South Pacific, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Ukraine, UK and USA. Most of these were from the education sector but there were also over 500 visits by commercial and non-profit providers. By the sixth issue in April, 2002, TOJDE had received about 17,000 visitors, including some from Barbados, Croatia, Indonesia, Ireland, Kuwait, Nepal, Trinidad and Tobago.

TOJDE has not operated its own counter service for the past five years but it may be assumed that the numbers accessing the website continue to increase. TOJDE now subscribes to IndexCopernicus International whose bibliographic services include journal abstracting, ranking and calculating downloads. When TOJDE first subscribed to this service in 2005, its Index Copernicus Value (ICV) was 3.34 over 10. In 2008, its ICV was 5.76 over 9, an encouraging increase in its rating². In 2008, TOJDE also signed contracts with the *Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC)*³ and EBSCOhost Electronic Journals Service⁴. The journal is also being considered for inclusion in the European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH)⁵ which currently includes five distance and open education journals including the open access "International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning" (IRRODL), and the "Journal of Distance Education". At the time of writing, a Google search for TOJDE yielded 337,000 results.

THE CONTRIBUTORS TO TOJDE

In its first two years, TOJDE was only published twice a year, each volume containing only 6-8 articles. However, it was resolved by the TOJDE Steering Committee that journal should become quarterly and from 2002 onwards, it appeared in Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn editions. The number of articles per issue has also increased over time, the largest number to date being 20. The journal also features book reviews and news items but these are not included in this analysis. The journal sometimes has guest editors.

The majority of the 342 articles appearing in the first nine volumes of TOJDE - 196 or 57% - came from Asian countries. Predictably, Turkey provided the greatest number of articles - 107 or 31%. There were also 23 articles from India, 18 from Malaysia, 12

from Pakistan, 10 from Bangladesh, 6 from the Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic, 4 from Israel, 3 from Iran, 3 from Saudi Arabia, 2 from Indonesia, 2 from the Philippines, and one each from Bahrain, Hong Kong, Jordan, South Korea, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The journal also published 28 articles from Africa – 17 from Nigeria, 3 from Egypt, 2 from Lesotho, and one each from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, Swaziland and Uganda. South America contributed 4 articles - 2 from Brazil, 1 from Argentina, and 1 from Mexico. North America provided 56 articles - 43 coming from the USA and 13 from Canada. Europe contributed 44 articles - 17 from the UK, 8 from Greece, 3 from Norway, 2 from Finland, 2 from France, 2 from Germany and one each from Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Irish Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Moldavia, Romania, Slovenia and Switzerland. There were 14 articles from Australia.

Such a range of countries of origin is impressive. Significantly, two-thirds of the articles were from non-Western countries. This is certainly commensurate with TOJDE's aim of developing new channels of communication in North Africa, the Middle East, New Turkic Republics, Eastern Europe and Baltic Republics. However, some countries targeted by the journal such as Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq and Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, Hungary, Poland, Croatia Bosnia, Estonia, Latvia and Ukraine, have yet to join the discourse. Most of the contributors were from the tertiary sector and their articles were concerned with distance education and e-learning in universities, polytechnics or colleges. Seven contributors were employees or consultants in the field of information and communication technology.

Another 7 contributors were involved in the schools sector. Very few contributors addressed the issue of distance education and technology in non-formal adult and community education and only two or three were concerned with workplace training applications.

The predominance of items from universities is understandable given their 'publish or perish' culture and the fact that most researchers are employed in academe. It is important that TOJDE continues to enable academics to present their theory-driven research and scholarly discourse. However, the original aims were for TOJDE to share experiences in using distance education methodologies and technologies in all non-formal and formal settings, so it is important that the journal encourages more contributions on researching, developing, applying and evaluating distance education and e-learning in open schooling, non-formal adult and communication, workplace training and professional development.

THE TOPICS ADDRESSED IN THE PAPERS

In its Calls for Papers, TOJDE invites contributions on a very long list of topics: the economic, social and cultural dimensions of distance education; the pedagogical, political, philosophical, legal and ethical aspects; organizational and financial issues; the changing role of the teacher; staff training and professional development; program and material development; digital libraries and virtual universities; guidance and counselling; assessment, measurement, quality control and evaluation; technology and infrastructure; the future of distance education: distance education and globalization; Internet privacy and security; equity, justice and human rights; partnerships with industry; etc.

This listing was deemed to be too lengthy and detailed for a manually conducted content analysis, so it was decided to categorize the articles under 7 broad headings:

- **Philosophy and theory**
- **Organization and costing**
- **Teaching and learning**
- **Course and courseware development**
- **Technology and media**
- **Evaluation and quality assurance**
- **Staff development**
- **Other**

All of the articles were read through to establish under which category they were best entered. The titles alone were not sufficiently revealing. For example, one paper bore the title: 'Effective change management strategies for embedding online learning within higher education and enabling the effective continuing professional development of its academic staff'. With such a title, this paper could have come under any or indeed all of the above categories. However, upon reading this article, it was decided that it was most appropriately categorized as 'Organization and costing'. However, there was inevitably a degree of subjectivity in determining the prime focus of some papers, so the following quantitative findings must be treated with caution.

Philosophy and Theory

It is important that TOJDE encourages forward-thinking planners, managers and practitioners to engage in discourse on the philosophical and theoretical aspects of distance education and technology. Original perspectives, hypotheses and frameworks are needed to shape future thinking and practice and without such underpinnings, research in these fields will simply be descriptive or surveys without clear objectives.

It was found that 31 articles or 9% could be categorized as philosophical or theoretical in that they gathered, summarized and analyzed ideas and issues, presented reasoned arguments or judgments, and aimed to persuade the readers of particular viewpoints on debatable topics.

Three of these articles debated broad educational issues - productivist education versus contextual learning; lifelong learning and mentoring; and differences in learning styles. Three others argued for the adoption of blended learning; the use of knowledge management systems; and the need for socio-cultural responsiveness in distance education. The majority of the articles were concerned with issues arising through the adoption of e-learning. There were papers on applying the principles of Paolo Freire to e-learning; the nature of knowledge on the web; children in the Information Age; the nature of virtual learning environments; online learning and assessment; socialization in online learning;; e-training and achieving a life-work balance; and quality in e-training. Four of the articles were concerned with the global ramifications of distance education: three presented cases for conceptualizing distance education as global, collaborative, and experiential and constructivist; and one questioned whether the globalization of open and distance education would result in educational and cultural hegemony.

Three articles discussed the potential of distance education in the developing world: to empower women in Africa; to provide continuing nutrition education; and to achieve rural social transformation and poverty reduction. One contributor wrote about the ethics of technology.

Organization and Costing

Enlightened leadership and sound planning, management and costing are called for in creating new or transforming existing systems and institutions and 33 or just under 10% of the articles addressed these issues. These mainly took the form of case studies of national or institutional systems, comparisons of educational systems in developed or developing nations, or suggestions on how provision might be achieved, for example through virtual institutions. A few of the articles discussed how distance education might be organized for non-formal adult and community learning in developing countries. One dealt with how distance education might be used to train employees in small to medium enterprises (SMEs). Three articles addressed the topic of leadership and change management and three dealt with finance - one examining the economics of distance education, one the costing of distance education, and one opportunity costing in distance education.

Teaching and Learning

Seventy-one or 20% of the papers examined teaching and learning issues in distance education and blended learning. However, many of the studies that were categorized and are discussed below under 'course and courseware development' and 'evaluation and quality assurance' were also concerned with teaching and learning processes and outcomes. Clearly, many contributors regard teaching and learning as at the heart of distance education and online learning. Most of the case studies and strategies discussed within this category concerned higher education. These articles ranged from teaching undergraduate science, language and information technology to developing research skills in graduate students. One article examined the design of virtual classrooms, another virtual education for inter-school learning, and yet another use of distance and online learning to train bank employees.

The issues covered ranged far and wide. They included assessment and test generation; online examinations; web-based homework; supporting and mentoring the distance and online learner; creating virtual learning communities; collaborative online learning; and building motivational systems into distance education. The strategies described also varied: project-based learning for adult learners; case-based learning; creating a community of inquiry; the use of online discussion lists and messaging systems; synchronous and asynchronous computer mediated communication using WebCT, email, personal digital assistants (PDAs), blogging, and podcasting; and the role of computer simulations, web-based puzzles and games and fieldwork in distance education.

The articles indicated that while there may be a wide variety of tools and instructional design models to choose from, the constants are the need for role changes in both teachers and learners, concern for individual and cultural differences, motivating and empowering the learners, providing a sense of social presence, and establishing the identities of the teacher in online learning environments.

Course and Courseware Development

As mentioned above, there was some overlap between the articles in this category and those listed under 'teaching and learning' and 'evaluation and quality control'. However, 11 of the articles were specifically concerned with course and course materials development processes: using opensource software; how a university organized its courseware development; the use of a team approach to designing online programs; developing a legal education course; re-designing a course for blended learning; creating an e-learning program in the Igbo language in Nigeria, and so on.

Technology and Media

Again confirming that the contributors saw teaching and learning as paramount, only 32 or 9% of the articles came into this category. These reflected the changes and new developments in technology over the journal's lifespan. The earlier articles were concerned with such technologies as TV, radio, interactive radio, computer animation and videoconferencing. The more recent papers examined the new and emergent technologies such as digital broadcasting and interactive TV; Second Life; Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP); opensource courseware (OSS); PDAs; and Web 2/Web 3D platforms. There were also articles about performance support systems in Lotus Notes 6; educational uses of the Internet; factors influencing applications of technology; the appropriateness of different technologies to different cultural settings; automated essay scoring; the status of, and prospects for, e-learning in developing countries; distance education for mobile Internet users; tools for collaborative online learning; support tools for e-health programs; designing an e-learning portal; learning management systems (LMSs) for mobile e-assessment; and automated categorization in digital libraries.

Evaluation and Quality Assurance

As befits a journal that states the aims of disseminating scientifically accurate reports on distance education, informing the profession, and ensuring quality, 140 or 41% of the articles were in the form of formative, summative, quantitative or qualitative empirical studies and/or concerned with quality assurance and continuous improvement. A considerable number reported on the characteristics, attitudes and experiences of distance or online learners. Many were concerned with the attitudes of undergraduate and graduate students towards distance education and online learning and the variables that shaped these.

Others reported on the views of other stakeholders including high school pupils, health workers in non-government organizations, working adults and those returning to formal education. There were also studies into enrolment trends; matching students' characteristics and achievements; and the differences between the attitudes and satisfaction levels of on-campus and off-campus students.

There were also graduate surveys and dropout studies; investigations into how female students coped with open learning; how gender influenced attitudes towards online learning; the causes of stress in students involved in interactive and collaborative learning; conventional university students' opinions of open university students; graduates' opinions on the usefulness of online careers guidance; and open school pupils' views on the merits of educational TV.

As noted above, many of these articles were also concerned with assessing teaching processes and learning outcomes in applications ranging from an e-learning-based youth development course to pre- and in-service teacher training, and from teaching undergraduate science to educating parents about autism.

There were also reports on staffs' and students' views on, and experiences with, distance and blended learning; comparisons between technology-based and face-to-face teaching learning outcomes; assignment work and exam results; and interactivity and online problem-solving. There were also evaluations of multiple assessment measures; group work; collaborative learning using the Delphi Method; asynchronous paired learning in e-learning; online discussion in teachers' in-service training programs; and online and study centre support for the distance learner.

Some of the evaluative studies focused more on technology – LMSs; Web 2.0 and the Internet; email; blogging; web-conferencing software; TV; radio; content management systems; learning objects; multimedia; games; computer simulations; mobile phones; podcasting, teachers' and administrators' utilization of technology; technology for in-service teacher training; etc..

There were also a few articles about the prospects for, and constraints on, distance education and online learning in developing countries, for example: to increase tertiary access for women in countries such as Pakistan and Ghana; to meet the extensive adult learning needs in Malaysia; the potential of e-exams in Nigeria; and the introduction of e-learning into university-level agricultural programs in Iran.

Other topics covered were: eye contact in synchronous online discussion; social presence in videoconferencing; e-learning in the EU; the operation of a university's test and research unit; how a university applied QA to its course materials development and delivery; quality insurance in an open high school; creating communities of practice in Arabic cultures; PISA and uses of ICT; the prospects for converting a university into a learning organization; a comparison of the student support systems at Allama Iqbal Open University and the UK Open University; cultural inclusiveness in online learning; staffs' experience of teaching online; and course coordinators' and course writers' experiences in developing open and distance courseware.

Staff Development

Staff development and support are clearly important to ensure quality in pedagogy, instructional design and applications of distance education and online learning. There is as yet little provision for this in most Asian institutions and this fact was reflected in there being only 13 articles on this topic.

Most of these were concerned with training university lecturers and tutors online. Of the remainder, one article discussed the use of distance and online learning for pre-service teacher training; three dealt with online in-service training for teachers; and one was concerned with e-training for English language teachers. One article discussed the issue of whether staff development for distance education should be top-down, bottom-up or peer-to-peer.

Other

11 articles were judged to fall outside these main categories. Two reported on other e-journals and one on a recent distance education conference. One discussed the kinds of institutional support required by the 'virtual professor', another a European language portfolio model, another e-libraries and e-books. Two dealt with marketing distance education, and one discussed the kinds of distance education research that would be required in the future.

DISCUSSION

Quality and Relevance

Before discussing the quality of the TOJDE articles, it should be noted that some question the quality of much of the research into distance education and educational technology. Daniel (2002) observes that the growth in these fields has been paralleled by the growth of poorly conceived and trivial research. Laurillard (1994), Phipps and Merisotis (1999) and others complain that too many studies are inconclusive because they ignore the variables that can have such a significant effect in using new methodologies and technologies. Naidu (2003), Passi and Mishra (2003) and Robinson and Creed (2004) find that much of the research in the field is reiterative, features poor literature reviews, fails to establish convincing links between theory, research and practice, employs invalid and unreliable instruments, lacks quantitative and qualitative rigour, has measurement flaws, inadequate sample sizes and poor analyses, and offers little that is new, significant or generally applicable.

So it is important that TOJDE strives for quality and advises potential authors against falling into these pitfalls.

With so many Asian institutions involved in reforming education and training and employing open, distance and online learning in exciting and innovative ways, Asian research in these fields might be expected to enjoy a high profile in the international literature. However, Latchem and Jung (in press) find this not to be so. In 2004-2007, 17%-25% of the papers originally submitted to UK Open University's journal, "Open Learning", were from Asia, but the acceptance rates of papers from the region varied between 4% and 10%. In 2006, the overall acceptance rate of papers in the "British Journal of Educational Technology" was 22.7%. Papers from Hong Kong and South Korea fared quite well but only one of the 12 papers from China, 2 of the 12 papers from Singapore, 3 of the 10 papers from Malaysia, and 13 of the 7 papers from Taiwan were accepted. All of the contributions from Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines and Thailand were rejected. In 2003-2007, only 10 of the 45 articles from Southeast Asia, 8 of the 36 articles from East Asia, 4 of the 25 from South Asia and 4 of the 51 from West Asia submitted to the "Australian Journal of Educational Technology" were accepted.

The editor of the Australian journal, "Distance Education", reports that the acceptance rate of Asian papers is close to zero unless western academics are giving a helping hand (Naidu, 2007). And less than 5% of the papers submitted from Asian countries were accepted for publication in the USA journal, "Educational Technology Research and Development", compared with the overall acceptance rate of 12%.

Research and scholarship in distance education and online learning are still nascent in many Asian countries and there is need to improve their quality, something which TOJDE can encourage. Quality is also all-important to the journal itself. With an increasing number of staff around the globe competing for tenure or promotion, there is strong competition to be published, and particularly in the more highly ranked journals. Because of the 'Impact Factor' - the measure of citations to science and social science journals that is applied by appointment committees and quality assurance and accreditation agencies - authors may bypass journals that are not rated highly or deliver low citation rates.

A number of Asian countries now have their own distance education journals and like TOJDE, they play a valuable role in diffusing findings and ideas. But it is also important that they aim for the same quality, credibility and status as the longer-established international journals. It ill behoves any e-journal to be a 'publisher of last resort'.

TOJDE aims to be a scholarly journal. It has a large and distinguished Editorial Board which includes some of the best-known names in the field. In its Call to Authors, it stresses that it requires manuscripts to be original, scientifically accurate, informative and coherent, of value to the profession, significant, timely, and consistent with the relevant literature. Manuscripts are subject to blind review by at least three members of the Editorial Review Board, and at the time of notification, authors may be asked to make revisions to meet the required standards. The acceptance rate is 65-70%.

The quality of the articles in TOJDE varies. A few might be charitably described as 'off message'. However, there has been a considerable improvement in the depth and extent of the research and reporting over the years. The earlier articles tended to be descriptive or theoretical. Now they tend to be quantitative-experimental and qualitative-descriptive studies examining needs, policies, procedures, practices and outcomes. An interest in technology is outweighed by concerns with teaching, learning and quality. There is little evidence of the formulaic pre- and post-test investigations undertaken by some Asian researchers. Some of the articles may be judged to be on a par with those in the better known and longer-established journals in the field. Some are particularly illuminating because they address topics from non-Western perspectives.

Cultural, socio-economic and technological circumstances can be different in Asia and so it is important that research and practice in distance, blended and online learning should not be over-reliant on Western theory and findings. Gunawardena (1999) suggests that research assumes an even greater importance in the developing world because of the north-south disparities in the production of knowledge. Spronk (2007) observes that a large pool of wisdom and accumulated experience in non-Western countries remains untapped. Altbach (2007) argues that knowledge production and dissemination should not be monopolized by the West and that Asia should be making a greater contribution to the world's knowledge network. Sinlarat (2007) observes that Asia needs to progress from being 'a receiving culture' to 'a producing culture' in regard to theory, research and practice. In these regards, TOJDE is performing an important role.

Towards the Future

There is a continuing need for researchers in distance education and e-learning to look beyond their immediate findings, dig ever deeper into the underlying symptoms and causes, arrive at conclusions and make recommendations that will inform practice or further research. Subjecting policies, procedures, processes and outcomes to rigorous research and public scrutiny may not always be easy in Asian contexts where organizations, roles and functions can be bound by tradition, consensus and harmony valued over individualism and candour, and criticism looked upon as unseemly.

However, if the potentials of distance education and technology are to be fully realized, more robust research is needed to inform policies, improve understandings and practices, and assure quality.

Some dramatic and significant educational changes and developments are occurring right across Asia. Governments are giving high priority to distance education and the region has the largest number of adult distance learners in the world, 7 of the world's mega-universities, over 70 open universities, and a large and growing number of dual-mode providers. E- and m-learning are being adopted in universities, schools, workplace training and non-formal adult and community education. The region contains some of the world's most advanced communications networks and the poorer nations are beginning to leapfrog the digital divide. Cyber universities and international consortia are entering the distance education market and Asian institutions are involved in transnational delivery. Innovations abound, ranging from virtual universities to SchoolNets, from classroom webquesting to distance education for literacy, and from using distance education for special education and gifted children to teaching prisoners to enhance their job prospects on release from jail. Research is needed in all of these areas and not simply in the higher education sector. It is to be hoped that TOJDE will seek to widen the range of articles even further.

This content analysis has revealed a highly commendable breadth and variety in the articles published by TOJDE. But there are still many areas requiring more research: admission systems; recognition of prior informal learning; credit transfer; accreditation; quality assurance; gender and cultural differences; transnational distance education; and inter-institutional and inter-sector collaboration and consortia.

All of this research needs to be ongoing – the word research after all means 'search and search again'. Circumstances are continually changing, there are always new depths and complexities to be explored and new knowledge is always throwing new light on assumptions and actions. So there is always need for more research. But rather than replicating others' studies - for example, into faculty and student acceptance of distance education and multimedia-based teaching and learning – contributors should be encouraged to seek out topics that are original, throw new light on Asian thinking, practices and achievements, and are more likely to appeal to reviewers, journal editors and international audiences. The editor of the "British Journal of Educational Technology" offers some valuable advice: choose a topic that no-one else has working on, because that makes you the world expert.

He also suggests that authors invite their colleagues or other mentors to critique their work and only submit this when everyone agrees that it is up to required standard (Rushby, 2007). Several TOJDE research papers have clearly benefitted from cross-institutional or international collaboration. Such collaboration enables all of the parties involved to gain new insights into the fields under investigation and the more experienced researchers and writers to mentor those new to the field. Such collaboration and mentoring can be south-south, not simply north-south.

It is noted that very few articles admitted to failures or shortcomings. Things are bound to go wrong when undertaking new ventures in distance and blended learning, but as Rerup (2003) observes, there is as much to be learned from failure as success and failure should always be seen as a stepping stone, not a stumbling block.

With the above points in mind, given its interest in the scholarship of distance education, TOJDE might consider mounting a special conference dedicated to researching in this field and/or organizing a workshop on this topic in conjunction with a major distance education conference.

TOJDE makes its full-text peer-reviewed articles openly accessible. This is fully in keeping with the philosophy of open and equitable access to knowledge and information and using opensource courseware for educational development. Needing only one web-based copy for access by any number of readers anywhere in the world, TOJDE is cheaper for both its publishers and its readers. As an electronic journal, its articles can be as long as the content and presentation warrant. Print journals usually limit the number of words to 4-5,000. Some of TOJDE's articles are 12,000 words long. Readers seeking particular information, authors or articles can easily switch from one volume or number to another through the Past Issues links and use Google or Find buttons to immediately access key words, phrases or items they need. An increasing number of important journals now have no print editions, and academics are becoming more used to online-only publication⁶. Anderson (2008) observes that open access journals further the respectability of open access publishing and are not only more equitable, but result in higher citations as they are more widely read by readers in all parts of the world.

The "British Medical Journal" online (www.bmj.com) argues that research belongs online. Umpleby (2008) suggests that the Internet allows the creation of virtual research institutes whose members can collaboratively and simultaneously test theories and trial new approaches in different countries to establish whether concepts or approaches that work well in one context can be applied in others. So, should TOJDE, like distance education itself, become more interactive, make use of multimedia and be collaborative? Might it, for example, not only feature articles but blogs, podcasts and streaming video presentations and case studies? This would reflect the kinds of cross over shown in newspapers and journals using the Internet as platform for TV and TV and radio providers putting transcripts of their broadcasts online. And could it do more to enable distance educators to engage in the kinds of geographically distributed and multidisciplinary collaboration that are finding answers to important scientific and medical questions such as understanding and controlling SARS and AIDS?

TOJDE is still a very young journal but is beginning to stand comparison with journals dating back to the 1980s. It has come a long way in realizing its aims in the last nine years -and still have greater heights to scale.

Endnotes:

¹ The Notes for Editors are occasional articles on a variety of topics and, unlike the papers in the Articles section, are not subject to the refereeing process.

² How ICV is calculated is explained at <http://journals.indexcopernicus.com/info.php>

³ <http://www.eric.ed.gov>

⁴ <http://www.ebscohost.com>

⁵ <http://www.esf.org/research-areas/humanities/research-infrastructures-including-erih/erih-initial-lists.html>

⁶ See <http://journalseek.net/>

BIODATA and CONTACT ADRESSES of AUTHOR



Colin Latchem was formerly Head of the Teaching and Learning Group at Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Western Australia and is a past President of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia. Since retiring from full-time university work, he has been a visiting professor in Japan and Korea, has consulted and been a keynote speaker at international conferences in China, Fiji, Hong Kong, Indonesia, USA, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and other

Asian countries and has researched and written extensively on open, distance and e-learning. His latest book, 'Distance and blended learning: Opening up Asian education and training', co-authored with Insung Jung, ICU, Tokyo, will be published by Routledge in June 2009. Email: clatchem@iinet.net.au

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