The idea of *open education*

Special themed issue: *Distance Education (Volume 44/4, 2023)*

Despite the considerable gains made in relation to advocacy, funding, and policy development around the idea of *openness*, especially in higher education, there are still few signs of celebration and no sense of a victory (Open University, 2022; Weller, 2014, p. 3). A possible reason for this may be the failure of advocates to see openness as part of a bigger agenda incorporating many other dimensions of learning and teaching as opposed to a narrow focus on *free* and *open* access to educational resources (Wiley, n.d.) as its key defining characteristic. The latter is a rather jaundiced view of openness that needs reconsideration (Allen & Seaman, 2014; Witthaus, 2012).

Open educational practice comprises a lot more than *free* and *open access* to educational resources, although that is most certainly an important part of it (Naidu, 2016). Open education is best seen as an omnibus term that has several dimensions including:

- *open access*, which is about inclusive and equal access to educational opportunities without barriers such as entry qualifications and ability to pay;
- *open learning*, which is about the opportunity to study at anytime, anywhere, and at any pace; and
- open scholarship, which is about the release of educational resources under an open license scheme that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation, and redistribution by others.

Since its formation in 1973, the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA; https://odlaa.org/) has championed this cause both nationally and internationally (Bewley, 2008). Its golden jubilee—coming up in 2023—gives us an opportunity to look both ways—backwards and forwards—at the idea of *open education*, including its various manifestations within the larger educational ecosystem, and how espoused theories and philosophies around open education are actually being applied in practice at various levels and in different areas across the world (Mishra, 2017).

The journal *Distance Education* (ODLAA's most significant contributions in this regard) has an equally enviable and rich history of pioneering research and scholarship in this field (Inglis, 1999; Keegan, 1980; Mitchell, 2009; Naidu, 2004, 2019). It seems fitting then to mark this occasion by devoting one of the issues of the journal (to be published in late-2023) to revisiting and reconsidering the idea of open education.

Types of submissions sought

For this special themed issue, we are seeking all kinds of submissions from *theoretical* or *conceptual* pieces to *research articles*, *systematic literature reviews*, as well as *critical reflections* and *commentaries.*

What and how to submit now
For now (February 28, 2023), please submit:
- 500-word abstract (without references)
- type of contribution and proposed title
- author names and their affiliation.

Please submit all proposals (questions and queries) to sommnaidu@gmail.com

Schedule and timeline of activities

Submit proposals (500-word abstract only)	**February 28, 2023**
Deadline for full (invited) submissions	**April 30, 2023**
Double-blind reviews of all submissions	May, June, July 2023
Revised version of accepted submissions	August, September 2023
Copyediting, production, typesetting	October 2023
Publication online and in print	November 2023

References

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