

Editorial

The DEANZ 2012 conference was themed with some irony. ‘Shift happens’ was appropriate from the very start of planning the event for Wellington—until July 2011, preliminary organisation was underway in Christchurch. Wellington was confirmed with members as the venue in August 2011, and this change required a largely fresh start to planning. Shift happens! However, one thing that didn’t shift was the decision to publish peer-reviewed papers for the conference in a special issue of the *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning*. It is my pleasure to introduce this special conference issue of the journal.

The DEANZ 2012 sub-themes of resilience, relevance, and reform were obvious areas of focus following the Christchurch earthquakes and the introduction of Education Performance Indicators to elements of tertiary education funding. The sub-themes will continue to be relevant as the means of educating at a distance, the expectations of students, and the requirements of funding agencies further adapt. The sub-themes are further elaborated as:

- resilience: dealing with uncertainty and coping with changes you can and cannot influence
- relevance: providing educational services that are relevant to the context and culture of the learner
- reform: moving to better futures for all by addressing political, social, economic, and personal drivers.

This issue features 12 articles, all of which are accepted as peer-reviewed papers for the DEANZ 2012 event. The themes of the conference are broadly reflected across this issue.

Before introducing the articles in vol. 16, issue 1, it is timely to comment on the quality of the work. While the criteria for peer-review were somewhat different for this issue, all of the papers in this submission have been peer reviewed by our usual reviewers based on their clarity and flow, sense of context, clear and appropriate methodology, placement in current literature, and relevance to the conference theme. These criteria do not substantially differ from our normal expectations.

First up, under the general heading of resilience, is an article by Steve Agnew and Stephen Hickson (University of Canterbury, New Zealand). Agnew and Hickson’s analysis of final grades following the cancellation of final exams reveals interesting correlations between online quiz marks and ‘invigilated’ assessments. Next, Julie Willems (Monash University, Australia) takes a systematic look at resilience as it relates to indigenous students, and argues that resilience is in fact the responsibility of not just the student but also of educators, institutions, and the student’s community. Willems’s work challenges distance educators to take a socio-ecological approach to their practice. Maggie Hartnett (Massey University, New Zealand) follows, with an article that challenges the oft-assumed correlation between online activity and student motivation. Readers may recall Hartnett’s previous article in vol. 15 (1), which also described student motivation in online distance learning (Hartnett et al, 2010). Hazel Owen (Ethos Consultancy, New Zealand) reports on the 3-year Virtual Professional Learning and Development (VPLD) programme, and describes its success in establishing a community of practice. Finally in the general sub-theme of resilience comes the work of Taipjutorus, Hansen, and Brown (Massey University, New Zealand), who explore ways in which course design might improve learner’s self-efficacy. Taipjutorus et al.’s pilot study in this issue forms the basis for a larger-scale project.

The conference sub-theme of relevance also receives good attention in this issue. Stuart Palmer (Deakin University, Australia) provides a large-scale consideration of OLE (Online Learning Environment, otherwise known as a learning management system or virtual learning environment) use by on- and off-campus students. Palmer comments on reported importance of

the OLE and access characteristics of Deakin University students, and subsequently questions uniform policies and templates for OLE use for on- and off-campus students. The next article, by Carolyn Bennett (FarNet E-Learning Cluster, New Zealand) and Michael Barbour (Wayne State University), describes the experiences of rural 'e-students' learning through online education in the far north of New Zealand. Bennett and Barbour conclude with suggestions for e-teacher professional development, with specific reference to pedagogies for Māori learners. Lesley Pohio and Maryann Lee of the University of Auckland describe how they collaborated to redesign a course for the online environment. Ending the collection on the sub-theme of relevance is the work of Garry Falloon (University of Waikato, New Zealand), who explores student perceptions of synchronous virtual classroom seminars and provides some useful tips for practitioners.

Our third sub-theme of reform first includes the work of Khoo, Johnson, and Zahra (University of Waikato, New Zealand). Khoo et al. describe an educator's journey into using a learning management system to engage students with one another and to facilitate deep learning. Our final two papers specifically consider e-learning adoption and classification, respectively. Stephen Marshall (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand) applies the e-learning Maturity Model (eMM) to a number of New Zealand institutions as a means of investigating change processes. Marshall concludes with five considerations for change management, which I am certain will resonate for those involved in institutional development. Finally, Amy Wilson (Massey University, New Zealand) considers how e-learning might be formally categorised, with specific reference to the New Zealand Ministry of Education's classification system.

Some additional articles were not quite ready for publication in this issue but we hope to bring them to you in the future. The DEANZ 2012 event is likely to feature further non-refereed papers that will eventually be suitable for consideration, and which I certainly welcome.

This issue of the *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning* requires special thanks. Paul Geraghty and Mike Turney from Open Polytechnic assisted with the editing process, and deserve recognition for their efforts in supporting the work of Kate Hunt. Dr Luke Strongman of Open Polytechnic provided valuable service in evaluating abstracts and communicating with authors in the initial stages. Finally, I would like to give special thanks to our peer reviewers who went well beyond the normal call of duty in their voluntary work. This issue is certainly testimony to the resilience of those who helped to bring you this publication. The relevance is brought to you by the authors themselves; the reform is, ultimately, up to you.

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References

Hartnett, M., St. George, A., & Dron, D. (2010). Being together: Factors that unintentionally undermine motivation. *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning* 15(1), 1–16.