

From the Editor

Dear readers of intWOJDE

Welcome to the first issue of the Women Online Journal of Distance Education, intWOJDE, an online publication in Eskisehir, Turkey.

The intWOJDE reflects that the disciplines of Women position, benefits, advantages and disadvantages in Distance Education/Learning, Open Learning areas are interdependent with one another, as education and technology increasingly affects our system, students, colleagues, distance educators, administrators, researchers and our own professional practice.

The first issue of the intWOJDE appeared at the begin of April, 2012 as Vol:1 Number: 1. The intWOJDE will aim to establish new channels of communication the for the women in distance education world in general from all of the world.

Among the goals of the TOJDE are to share experiences on effective use of distance education in formal and non-formal education, to provide a communication network among distance education experts in order to able to define new strategies for dealing with the issues of distance education for women. In international scope, this scholarly e-journal will publish refereed articles, researches, case studies, book/conference reviews focusing on the women issues and challenges of providing research and information services to women learners participated or enrolled at any of level of distance education. It will particularly strive to meet the continuing education needs of practitioners by providing a forum for the discussion of extended learning policies and practices, and trends in information technologies as they impact the delivery of any kind of the student support services for distance learners and institutions.

This first edition features articles ranging from theoretical to practical studies, across a wide range of interests and topics. In this issue is published 5 articles, by 9 authors from 4 different countries are placed. These published articles are from Nigeria, Russia and USA and Zimbabwe

Our first article, entitled **OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING: An Alternative University Education for Women At The Zimbabwe Open University**, written by Tichaona MAPOLISA and Chipso CHIRIMUUTA, from the Zimbabwe Open University, ZIMBABWE. In their descriptive study metion end examined that study extent to which open and distance learning(ODL) is an alternative university education for women at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU). it explored 50 ZOU staff, that is , 12 female academic and nine clerks- and 1 7 male academic staff and 12 clerical staff who were all purposively sampled. The study was a qualitative in nature. Its research strategy was a case study. Data were gathered using open-ended questionnaires. The study found out that most women had been deprived of university education because of the absence of ODL university education before 1993. Cultural and historical factors used to elbow women out of the conventional university education. The study concluded that lack of university education for women could be a drawback for the production of the human capital. It also concluded that lack of university education for women was a letdown to national development. The study recommended the need for Ministry of higher and tertiary education stake holders to allocate recourses to ODL university education for women. The study could be extended to other ODL tertiary education institutions in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries for the sake of comparison using other research methodologies.

Second article from USA written by Khitam AZAIZA, from Dr. Nova Southeastern University, Fishler School of Education, USA on "WOMEN'S DIALOG AND DISTANCE LEARNING: A University in the Arab World". Her study purosos to identify the

relationship between the Arab women's dialog and their perceptions of distance education, their personal relevance with the distance education paradigm, and their life affiliations within a distance education environment. *Aspects of Moore's Transactional Distance Theory* were investigated in this study. Transactional distance education occurs in an environment when teachers and learners are separated. This separation deals with learners' and teachers' behaviors and affects both. This study is a descriptive study employed a mix of methods. A sample of 150 active female learners at the Al-Quds Open University in Paletsine-Gaza Strip Branch was surveyed. A response rate of 80% was obtained. Furthermore, eight females from the responses were telephone interviewed. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were calculated to identify significant relationships of life affiliations, personal relevance satisfaction, and perception of distance education dimensions towards female students' dialog in a distance education setting. The findings indicated that life affiliations had no significant differences on the women's dialog measures through distance education. However, the personal relevance and the perceptions about distance education were significantly related to the concept of women's dialog.

The third article arrived again from Zimbabwe and titled as "CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING AT THE ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY: A Case of Matabeleland North and Bulawayo Regions", and written by Enna Sukutai GUDHLANGA, from Sian Newsome MAGADZA and her colleague Onias MAFA, from Zimbabwe Open University Bulawayo Region, ZIMBABWE. This paper recognizes that women's participation in higher education is very low. Women's marginalization in higher education stems from the traditional patriarchal tendencies, customary law and colonialism. The paper discusses the opportunities and challenges that female students face in trying to access distance education in Zimbabwe. Female students are under-represented at ZOU, the sole open and distance learning institution in Zimbabwe. The female student population is worsened by the fact that a larger proportion of them than male students drop out. The reasons for this are multiple but revolve around women's multiple roles of home keeper, wife and mother. The paper focuses on Matabeleland North and Bulawayo Regions in order to compare a rural and an urban set up. Data was collected from ZOU students and lecturers through in-depth interviews. It is hoped the paper will bring to the fore the various challenges that female students encounter and finally emerge with some possible intervention strategies that could help increase the number of female students' participation in distance education.

The Gender approach to development (GAD) will also guide this study. GAD analysis highlights the incentives and constraints associated with the work of women and men and highlights differences in their roles, workloads, access to resources and decision making opportunities, the impact of interventions on them and the implications for planning and implementation. The gender approach to development advocates for the lessening of social inequalities between men and women. Gender as a policy criterion has been found to reduce poverty, raises farm efficiency and improves natural resources management (Ellis, 2000). It also emphasizes participatory approaches as a tool to empower women through their articulation of their needs, rights and capabilities. Communities should be encouraged to embrace the gender approach when focusing on development issues in communities. Once women are empowered and have the social and economic resources the quality of life of their households improves. If women therefore contribute so much to the social well-being of families in particular and communities in general it is therefore necessary for policy makers to develop policies that enable communities to improve women's access to resources like distance education.

The fourth one is titled as "DISTANCE EDUCATION AS A WOMEN EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY IN AFRICA" and written by Felix Kayode OLAKULEIN and Olugbenga David OJO From National Open University of Nigeria, NIGERIA. They mentioned in their study

that women emancipation through empowerment all over the world is at its peak and Africans generally are not left out. It is an attempt to make sure that women's voices are heard and are given their right places in the scheme of things. Nonetheless, the issue of educational attainment of women considering the low level of girls' education in Africa is at a negative variance to attaining women position since certain educational attainments are required to function effectively in the various available organs; be it work place, group or committees of local or international standing. This paper therefore stresses the use of open and distance institution in Nigeria as an avenue to attain knowledge and education that would put women in a better stead toward achieving their aims and aspirations.

The fifth article written by Galina ARTYUSHINA and Olga SHEYPAK from Moscow, RUSSIA. This article analyzes the modern situation with the gender problem at one of the Russian technological universities -"MATI- Russian State Technological University named after K.E.Tsiolkovsky" and discusses the reasons of imbalance between women and men in student, postgraduate and teacher population.

Dear readers, int.WOJDE wishes to add new sections in its body as "Notes for Editor" and a "Review" in its future issues as soon as possible. So we are waiting materials for these sections too in due course.

You can reach us online either directly at <http://www.wojde.org> To receive further information and to send your recommendations and remarks, or to submit articles for consideration, please contact [intWOJDE](mailto:intwojde@gmail.com) Secretariat at the below address or e-mail us at intwojde@gmail.com

Hope to stay in touch and wishing to meet in our next Issue, 1st of July 2012

Cordially,

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