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## From the Editor

### Dear readers of intWOJDE

Welcome to the second issue of the Women Online Journal of Distance Education-intWOJDE. Three months are passed after the first publishing. During this three months we received many positive feedback for publishing int.WOJDE from around the world and especially from distance education environment. We thank here to all sender and the readers of int.WOJDE for their support. Again we updated our editorial board of intWOJDE by adding a new editors around the world literature. So that we believe that intWOJDE is more reliable now.

The second issue of the int.WOJDE appeared now as Vol: 1 Number: 2 on the net. In this issue is published 8 articles, by 11 authors from 8 different countries are placed. These articles are arrived to int.WOJDE from Canada, Egypt, Jamaica, Mauritius, Nigeria, Serbia, Sri Lanka, and USA. This time we placed and republished some articles for the reason to share with our readers once more these very good studies in the name of women for distance education field. We hope int.WOJDE readers will be Honest when read them. We will carry on for republishing studies in due course of the int.WOJDE issues In addition, one "Book Review", one "Success Story" and "Some Explanations Sections" are included to the this issue.

Our first article, entitled as "Distance Education: A Perspective from Women's Studies" and written by Natasha PATTERSON, from the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, CANADA. This article was first published in *thirdspace: a journal of feminist theory & culture*, 9(1) (2010) and is reprinted with permission from the author on 05.29.2012. Her paper critically explores the links between Women's Studies and distance education and questions whether this style of learning is compatible with feminist pedagogical goals. A review of the literature was conducted, primarily from a US and Canadian perspective and the following are highlighted as key concerns to feminist educators: gender, technology, curriculum, and pedagogy. Significantly, the research suggests that distance education continually downplays the importance of a gender analysis despite the fact that women make up the majority of distance education users. The research also reveals that feminist teachers are increasingly using their experiences working in distance education to expand upon how, when, and where we teach Women's Studies and that techniques employed within distance education could be usefully applied to in-class learning. Paper concludes that with suggestions of how we might begin to bridge the gap between feminist pedagogy and distance education.

The second article from Jamaica written on "Teaching Men Feminism By Distance Education: Perspectives, Challenges and the Way Forward" by Dalea BEAN, from Institute for Gender and development Studies University of the West Indies, JAMAICA, This article was also presented in The First Edition of the International Conference The Future of Education which was held in Florence, on 16-17 June 2011, Italy and published the Conference Proceedings with the papers of the papers presented during the conference are available on a book entitled "The Future of Education Conference Proceedings 2011" published (ISBN code: 978-88-7647-648-8) by the Italian publisher Simonelli Editore. This paper examines the issues surrounding teaching men feminism particularly via the medium of online, distance learning. Increasingly, tertiary institutions in the Caribbean are adopting online learning as the way forward to ensure that its citizens are well equipped to enter the global workforce. There is also a move towards increasing the

number of tertiary educated males, who are in the minority in many universities and tertiary level intuitions.

By focusing on a lesser known area in the research on gender pedagogy and distance learning, this paper highlights the importance of studying the particular challenges and benefits of teaching men feminist theory. This is mainly achieved through data garnered from a sample of learners themselves, and as such is largely a qualitative paper which taps into the narratives of these men as its major source. The personal experience of the author in the area of coordinating an online distance programme also proves to be an interesting perspective for the work. This is buttressed by literature from the leading researchers and academics in the area of distance learning and feminist theorizing and pedagogy. The paper argues that there are unique challenges and benefits in teaching men feminist theory and highlights the benefits and drawbacks of doing so online. It also suggests ways in which the challenges may be surmounted in order to facilitate an increased number of men who are interested in investing in online education and particularly those with an interest in gender studies.

The third article is titled "Teaching Staff' Attitude Toward ICT: Is Gender A Factor?". Written by Mohamed ELSAADANI, from The Arab Academy for Science & Technology & Maritime Transport, Alexandria, EGYPT. His research seeks to understand whether gender is a factor that should be considered when considering teaching staff' attitude toward Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Survey methodology is facilitated through the use of the questionnaires. The results showed that no difference between being a male or a female as regard to the attitude toward ICT among teaching staff in Egyptians HEI; thus, gender is not a significant factor when considering attitude toward ICT by teaching staff members in Egyptians HEI. The result of this research has significant implications to HEI when they plan, develop, and adopt ICT; thus, HEI has to consider that teaching staff' attitude toward ICT is not related to their gender.

The fourth one is from Sri Lanka on gender subject and entitled as "Partnership And Collaboration in Research: Towards Achieving Gender Equity in Higher Education", written by [Chandra GUNAWARDENA](#), Open University of Sri Lanka, SRI LANKA. The paper describes how regular communication, meetings in respective countries, adaptation of research instruments to suit country contexts, common scheduling of activities and guidance and monitoring by the Project Coordinating Team enabled research partners to; make a significant contribution to knowledge on gender equity in higher education, enhance research capacity of junior researchers, disseminate study findings, raise awareness and initiate follow-up action on gender issues in higher education among policy makers and authorities and to promote multicultural understanding and the impact of cultures on gender equity in higher education. This paper also was presented at The Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) on Achieving Development Goals: Innovation, Learning, Collaboration and Foundations Sunset Jamaica Grande Resort, 30 October-3 November, 2006, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, reprinted author's official permission on 10.04.2012. Also it is available from <http://pcf4.dec.uwi.edu/index.php>.

"Does Open And Distance Learning Allow For Reaching The Unreached?: Assessing Women Education In Nigeria" is the fifth article which is written by Olowola TEMITAYO, Staff of Training & Development National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos, NIGERIA. He mentions in his article that women amongst other categories of people can be regarded as unreached group when the issue of access to education is considered world over. The culture in Nigeria as it is in many other African countries support the education of boys than that of girls. This has substantially reduced the number of women that are found in many aristocratic professions today without consideration for their ability and capability.

**This paper considers the education of womenfolk in relation to the opportunity which the distance education mode avail the entire people of the universe wherever it is in operation with a view to confirm if the paradigm change brought about by the introduction of open and distance learning mode of education actually gives access to the education of the womenfolk in Nigeria.**

**The sixth article written by Mirjana RADOVIĆ-MARKOVIĆ from Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade, SERBIA, Brenda NELSON-PORTER, Northcentral University, AZ, USA and Muhammed OMOLAJA, from International College of Management and Technology, Nigeria (ICMT International College), NIGERIA, WEST AFRICA. This article titled as "The New Alternative Women's Entrepreneurship Education: e-Learning and Virtual Universities". This article is appeared in JWE as cited here: MARKOVIĆ, R. M.; NELSON-PORTER & Brenda, OMOLAJA, M. (2009). The New Alternative Women's Entrepreneurship Education: e-Learning and Virtual Universities, *Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship And Education*, No. 1-2/2009, Publisher: Institute of Economic Sciences ISSN: 1821-1283, pp.1-12, COBISS.SR-ID: 157987852USA.**

**Having in mind that due to fast changes in techniques and technology especially in the last decade of 20th century, new kinds of business and jobs emerged, the need for new knowledge became very clear. Accordingly, everywhere in the world the existing education system is being redefined, and educational programs that have to closely relate to practice are being improved. For that sake, "new schools for entrepreneurs and managers" are founded, which are based on modern programs and courses meant for various groups of businesspeople. Very popular are virtual faculties, which are founded all around the world and enable connection between businesspeople and business learners with lecturers from all around the world, no matter where they actually might reside. Participating in courses and testing via the Internet, essentially change previous way of gaining knowledge in classical classrooms. This way of learning contributes to fast information exchange, more access to the newest knowledge and experiences in this domain and save the time and money.**

**Thus, in this millennium the classic way of education will be slowly substituted with some other forms of education, in which learning from homes and offices with the help of computers, were true. Interactive education should provide a completely new dimension of gaining knowledge making learning faster and easier for those who attend certain courses. In this article the authors aimed to explain advantages and disadvantages of e-learning with a stress of special benefits for women. Additionally, presented are results of several researches relevant to the topic.**

**The seventh article in int.WOJDE titled as "OPENING DOORS TO THE 'LESS PRIVILEGED' The Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) Experience" written by T. JOYEJOB and S. Nundoo-GHOORAH from the Division of Distance Education Mauritius College of the Air, Reduit, MAURITIUS". This paper highlights the results of a survey study that investigated the profile of typical Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) learner and contribution made by MCA in the provision of access to tertiary education by marginalised groups. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used and data was collected through a questionnaire and interview schedule from 102 randomly selected MCA distance learners and one female interviewee. The respondents were drawn from 6 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Descriptive data analysis was mainly used, including frequency distribution tables, graphs and figures.**

**The results of this study indicate that there are more female enrolees than males at MCA, since three out of every four MCA learners are females. A significant number of MCA learners are mature working adults and a majority of these learners are from less privileged income groups. The survey also shows that women generally consider ODL to**

be compatible with motherhood and job constraints, while most respondents view MCA programmes as affording them a second chance. In addition, many of the respondents find the cost of MCA programmes affordable.

The eighth and the last article from USA and written by LaWanna LEASE BLOUNT who is from American School of Genealogy, Heraldry and Documentary Sciences, USA. Her article is focused and titled as "Women Administrators in Distance Higher Education: An Exploratory Study". In her paper, she indicates that "Currently we know little about the role of women administrators in distance higher education. This exploratory study based on a sample of 26 women administrators provides data on their backgrounds, career ladders, mentoring experiences, administrative concerns, and their view of competencies needed in distance higher education administration. Leadership and faculty concerns were top priorities. The findings of the study indicate that comprehensive faculty and administrative training programs are needed for the design and delivery of distance education. Further development of interpersonal and communication skills need to be encouraged between all personnel in systems. Continued dialog is recommended to rethink and rework workloads, budgetary allocations and tenure criteria. The "Learning Organization" and its leadership model are recommended for implementation in building a new paradigm for the virtual education age". Her article also was first published in *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, The first online professional refereed journal for women in leadership, Dr. Genieve Brown, Dr. Beverly J. Irby, Eds., Sam Houston State University, Vol: 25, No. 1 Summer, 2008. pp. 1-21.

As we indicated in previous issue, int.WOJDE wishes to add new section in its body as "Notes for Editor" in its future issues as soon as possible. So we are waiting materials for this section 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 [int.WOJDE](mailto:int.wojde@gmail.com) Secretariat at the below address or e-mail us at [intwojde@gmail.com](mailto:intwojde@gmail.com)

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

Cordially,  
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## **DISTANCE EDUCATION: A Perspective from Women's Studies**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper critically explores the links between Women's Studies and distance education and questions whether this style of learning is compatible with feminist pedagogical goals. A review of the literature was conducted, primarily from a US and Canadian perspective, and the following are highlighted as key concerns to feminist educators: gender, technology, curriculum, and pedagogy. Significantly, the research suggests that distance education continually downplays the importance of a gender analysis despite the fact that women make up the majority of distance education users. The research also reveals that feminist teachers are increasingly using their experiences working in distance education to expand upon how, when, and where we teach Women's Studies and that techniques employed within distance education could be usefully applied to in-class learning.

This paper concludes with suggestions of how we might begin to bridge the gap between feminist pedagogy and distance education.

**Keywords:** Distance education, feminist pedagogy, Women's Studies, gender, technology, Canada.

### **INTRODUCTION**

During my time as a women's studies graduate student, I have had several opportunities to work in the classroom, tutoring undergraduates on feminist theory and praxis. But it has been my work with distance education that has given me pause for reflection. I was first introduced to distance learning when I was employed as a teaching assistant for a first-year women's studies course.

The intellectual and practical benefits gained from this experience notwithstanding, the model of learning suggested by the course structure was one of individualized learning, with little to no contact among students or between tutor and students. I brought to the course a set of expectations and understandings about feminist pedagogy: students would embrace cooperative learning by sharing personal experiences, and they would link those experiences to larger meta-questions about gender equality and social justice.

At the time, I felt that the print-based structure of the course (whereby students worked at their own pace, outside of the physical classroom) seemed very disconnected from feminist pedagogical practices. The 'virtual' structure of the course led me to the conclusion that we feminist educators need to critically assess the relationship between feminism, women's studies, distance education, and the woman student. In so doing, we will have greater insight into the limitations imposed by, and the possibilities presented through, this complex and often contradictory relationship.

My purpose here is to critically review the largely North American literature on feminist pedagogy and distance education within the discipline of women's studies and to suggest

ways to better integrate these two perspectives. Several key questions structure this review.

First, what does the distance education model of learning have to offer feminist pedagogy and, conversely, can distance education be compatible with feminist educational objectives?

Second, what are the feminist concerns regarding distance education?

Finally, why should distance education matter to feminist teachers?

Feminism has transformed the classic model of adult education by challenging hierarchies of knowledge and authority and by tackling issues of gender inequality in the classroom (Maher & Tetreault, 2008). The invisibility or anonymity of students in distance education may therefore seem to contradict principles of feminist pedagogy, which, when utilized by feminist educators, focus on making female students *more* visible, not less; or as some feminist skeptics ask, "Why substitute a simulation when you can have the real thing?" (Schweizer, 2001, p. 204). Inspired by my own experiences facilitating learning in distance education courses, I want to tackle this apparent contradiction. In the distance education that I have been part of, there is little engagement among students, people live at great distances from and do not know one another, and it is difficult to gauge whether the material has any significant impact on the majority of the student body (other than the few who regularly stay in contact). Thus, I too have doubts about the compatibility of feminist pedagogy with the distance education model of learning.

I begin by briefly sketching out the concept and importance of distance education within adult learning. Building on this discussion, I then examine the feminist debate on distance education, focusing on particular concerns about gender, technology, curriculum, and pedagogy. As we will see, feminist educators are still debating each of these issues, and many are using their writing to share their experiences with distance teaching to highlight both the challenges of and possibilities inherent in this model of learning. Through my review, I will show that I am arguing for a feminist model of distance education that not only incorporates the needs of students and feminist educators but also supports student growth and skill development. The model must also be flexible enough to adapt to rapidly changing learning environments brought on by advances in technology. I will conclude by suggesting ways to begin to bridge the gap between feminist pedagogy and distance education.

### **DISTANCE EDUCATION: Contexts and Models**

The purpose of distance education is to make higher education more accessible and flexible for adult learners who would not otherwise be able to continue their education within the traditional classroom setting. Kaye (1989) describes distance education as follows: "Teaching is to a large degree mediated through various technologies and learning generally takes place on an individual basis through supported independent study in the student's home or workplace" (p. 6). The virtual nature of distance education is meant to offer students more control over the pace and context of their learning. Of course, distance education does not come for free, and many critics have argued that the costs, both financial and personal, may be too high for many potential learners (Kaye, 1989; Kramarae, 2003), especially when we consider how quickly learning technologies (i.e., software and programs) change.

Canadian distance education, or learning at a distance, was implemented as early as the late nineteenth century and hearkened back to an earlier era when provisions were made

to educate people across a vast geographical space (Canadian Association of Distance Education, 1999).

The implementation of mail service has also been credited with the rise in correspondence courses offered by Canadian universities in the late nineteenth century. In places where there was no mail service, the North West Mounted Police (now the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) delivered materials to students (Canadian Association of Distance Education, 1999). Even though universities such as Queen's University and the University of British Columbia offered correspondence courses by the early twentieth century, distance education did not really prosper in Canada until the 1960s. It was during this period of growth, from the 1960s to the mid-1970s, that a number of postsecondary institutions across Canada (e.g., Simon Fraser University and Memorial University) began offering a limited number of distance education courses. During the 1980s a number of universities (e.g., McGill University) developed whole programs dedicated to distance education (Canadian Association of Distance Education, 1999).

Today, most public Canadian universities offer a variety of distance education courses (referred to as bimodal), and some institutions -for instance, Alberta's Athabasca University and the former Open University Consortium of British Columbia, now called Thompson Rivers University- are completely devoted to adult distance education (referred to as unimodal). Distance education courses are offered for many kinds of degrees and programs and serve multiple purposes, from professional upgrading and undergraduate survey courses to graduate studies. Anita Clair Fellman created the first two women's studies distance education courses at Simon Fraser University in the 1980s (Sturrock, 1988).

Since the late twentieth century, distance education has undergone changes brought about by rapidly occurring technological advancements and evolving student needs. The generational model of distance education is particularly useful for exploring these changes and will help illuminate my discussion of feminist pedagogy and distance education in women's studies. Using a generational model, education researcher Nipper (1989) has shown how distance education has gone through three major historical shifts.

The first generation, called correspondence teaching, relied solely on printed material. The traditional student-teacher hierarchy remained intact, and student feedback was slow. Nipper suggests that many Western postsecondary institutions premised their early distance education courses on this model. Canada's early distance education model conformed closely to this structure and, thus, can be interpreted as part of this first generation.

The second generation, referred to as multimedia distance education, developed in the late 1960s. This model relies on a mix of print and broadcast media, as well as on some teleconferencing combined with face-to-face interaction between teacher and student. Canada's own boom in distance education in the late 1960s can be attributed to the integration of these emerging technological developments, especially given that the country's postsecondary institutions had to ready themselves for the influx of students that would accompany the postwar population explosion. Overall, the objective of both the first and second generations was the distribution of materials to learners.

In both generations, learners have little contact with instructors and little to no contact with other learners. Nipper (1989) points out that the first- and second-generation delivery modes are often criticized because they are constructed to favour those who are already educated and ignore the social processes involved in learning. This last point has certainly been taken up by feminist educators. They call for, and adopt, teaching techniques that view the student as an active participant in the creation of knowledge

who is responsible for his or her own learning. The student is not simply a passive receiver of education.

The third generation -made possible largely by the development of web communications technologies in the late twentieth century (email, chat rooms, and technologies designed specifically for online learning such as WebCT and First Class)- addresses these issues by prioritizing communication between students and teachers and among students. This model is also defined by its use of group work, more flexible curricula, and the narrowing of the social distance between students and teachers (Nipper, 1989). As noted in a report by the Canadian Association of Distance Education (CADE) (1999), distance education facilitators have always made use of all available technology. Nevertheless, it is also important to recognize that integrating computer-mediated communications (CMCs) into distance education is not supposed to replace more traditional models of communication. Rather, CMCs should complement and expand on existing frameworks and models (Kaye, 1989). Specialists such as Kaye (1989) argue that this will give students the best learning experience possible. Ultimately, though, the use of CMCs will depend on academic disciplines and pedagogical needs (Kaye, 1989). Indeed, the use of CMCs in distance education courses for the discipline of women's studies is still being debated and explored.

#### **WOMEN'S STUDIES GOES THE DISTANCE: Debating Distance Education**

Feminists have always been concerned with women's access to education and the conditions under which their education occurs (e.g., teaching practices and student-teacher relations). Certainly, there is a long history of women in the West, even pre-first-wave feminists, who argued for women's right to a formal education on par with what men received (e.g., Mary Wollstonecraft in the eighteenth century). The later mass-mobilized movement of first-wave feminism from the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War fought for women's access to postsecondary education in various (male-dominated) disciplines. The second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s continued to debate education issues, especially by focusing on the development of curricula, courses, and programs that focused on making visible women's history and experiences. Indeed, feminist educators have long noted that so-called gender-neutral education models tend to be a code for andocentric and Western ways of knowing, an observation that appears to be borne out in distance education literature, the bulk of which is not concerned with gender issues (Raddon, 2007), let alone with the specific concerns and needs of women students.

In this sense, although discussions about CMCs and generations of distance education are no doubt important, the specific needs and experiences of women are rarely acknowledged in them. In the case of distance education, gender must take centre stage as an important category worthy of scholarly inquiry.

It is imperative that feminist teachers continue to contest this oversight through their dedication to research and change. Feminist pedagogy is generally concerned with knowledge construction, power relationships, the assertion that the personal is political, the relationship between theory and practice, and a critique of traditional approaches (Tisdell, 2000; Nawratil, 1999). Because feminist pedagogies are informed by a variety of critical theories, from postmodernism to psychology, there is no single definition of feminist pedagogy (Tisdell, 2000; Nawratil, 1999).

In terms of practice, the feminist or women's studies classroom has typically been viewed as a somewhat safe, albeit highly contested, space in which women (and men) can engage in vibrant intellectual exchanges and draw on personal experience to inspire debate and growth. But the notion of safe space in the women's studies classroom, much like the consciousness-raising groups of second-wave feminism, has been vociferously

challenged by lesbians and women of colour, who argue that such spaces often reproduce hierarchies of inequality and invisibility by privileging the experiences of white, middle-class, heterosexual, and able-bodied students and instructors and, thus, further marginalize the voices of women who fall outside the hetero-normative gender script (Maher & Tetreault, 2008).

This highlights the ways in which feminist pedagogy debates are often constrained by their discussion of physical space(s), resulting in fewer discussions and explorations of feminist teaching practices that occur in non-traditional (i.e., virtual) settings. Feminist distance educators such as Briggs and McBride (2005) and Nawratil (1999) have noted this exclusion, and the literature on distance education courses in women's studies reveals the frustrating limitations of incorporating traditional feminist pedagogies into the distance education model (Smith & Norlen, 1994; Cronan Rose, 1995; Hopkins, 1999; Whitehouse, 2002).

More recent studies on feminist pedagogy within the physical classroom, however, do raise important questions about the possibility of carrying out traditional feminist pedagogical practices within the (masculinist) institutional space of the university. Feminist educators, whether teaching online or in the classroom, face institutional barriers in their choice of teaching practices; for instance, they are constrained by class size, location, and the availability of technology, all of which aid in the construction of teacher-student relations, particularly assumptions about the student's subject position (Webber, 2006).

However, these limitations have not stifled or silenced feminist educators; the classroom, both as a physical place and space, has become yet another site for critical reflection, activism, and resistance. Indeed, students in the feminist or women's studies classroom are given the opportunity to think as critically about their learning environments (Oberhauser, 2008) as they do about other aspects of their everyday lives.

The feminist literature on distance education reveals the myriad ways feminists are teaching women (and men): teleconferencing via some form of media technology, with the possibility of some face-to-face interaction (Spronk & Radtke, 1988; Burge & Lenksyj, 1990; Leiper, 1994; Smith & Norlen, 1994; Cronan Rose, 1995; Hopkins, 1999); a combination of in-class and online learning (Guymmer, 1999; Schweitzer, 2001; Allahyari, 2002; Whitehouse, 2002; Marchbank, 2007; Maher & Hoon, 2008) and entirely web-based learning (Joseph, 1999). These pedagogical techniques are not exclusive to the women's studies classroom, but they are unique in that they offer female students' alternative learning sites that encourage them to be active learners, for distance education tends to be more student-centred (Joseph, 1999). These various techniques have also been used to help overcome some of the exclusionary practices and problems attached to the physical classroom discussed above. For instance, distance courses can transcend geographical borders, bringing together female students from all over the world and providing them with the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge with a diverse group of women (Joseph, 1999). The ability of distance education to cross all kinds of borders (e.g., provincial or national) creates a forum for feminist teaching and learning that challenges the aforementioned narrow focus on the experiences of white, middle-class, heterosexual, and able-bodied women. Other feminist educators have found that the online classroom may also level the playing field, if you will, for "students who usually emerge as 'natural' leaders in face-to-face discussions cannot dominate the asynchronous discussions any more than the shy or timid student can dominate the face-to-face discussions" (Whitehouse, 2002, p. 219).

Of course, the degree of technological sophistication within any learning environment depends on many factors, such as the instructor's level of knowledge and comfort,

institutional support and financing, and the development and accessibility of new(er) learner-based technologies. Despite these kinds of differences, the main issue most feminist distance educators raise again and again is the lack of research on the gendered aspects of distance education (Burge & Lenksyj, 1990; May, 1994; Hanson et al., 2004; Johnson, 1999; Briggs & McBride, 2005; Raddon, 2007). I identify two subfields emerging from this larger concern with gender: gender and technology and women's needs as distance education students.

## GENDER AND TECHNOLOGY

The role of technology in education is far from neutral. For many feminist educators, the use of computer technology to facilitate learning is fraught with contradictions: it can be both empowering and problematic for female users. In particular, some feminist critics, employing gender socialization theories, argue that women learn differently from men (i.e., their communication preferences differ) and therefore require technological approaches that facilitate a learning style sensitive to their specific needs (Joseph, 1999; Hanson et al., 2004). Although this is an important factor in determining women's needs as distance students, I contend that it is just as important to build women's comfort and confidence to a level where they feel competent using any software, regardless of whether it addresses feminine modes of communication.

Clearly, there is a growing body of academic literature, as well as governmental reports, suggesting that the gender technology gap is rapidly decreasing. A recent report released by Statistics Canada (based on a 2003 survey) found that two-thirds of Canadian women use the Internet on a regular basis (Lindsay & Almey, 2006). Younger women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four are on par with their male peers, especially when it comes to email-use which remains consistent until their mid-forties (Lindsay & Almey, 2006). The gender gap does appear to increase after age sixty-five, when women's Internet use drops off significantly. Scholarly research on women and girl gamers also suggests that women are becoming equal participants within cyberspace.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, rather than reinforcing or propping up essentialist arguments that would restrict women to particular kinds of technology, I prefer to focus on strategies for increasing women's use of technology, which they can then fashion to their own needs and desires.

For some feminist educators, part of the problem can be resolved by partially integrating learning technologies into the curriculum, for this will aid in the development of women's skill building and confidence. In their article, "Distance Education: A Manifesto for Women's Studies," Briggs and McBride (2005) support this approach, arguing for the integration of technology not only as a tool for the dissemination of information but also as a way to incorporate skill building within curricula (e.g., teaching women how to make a webpage). Not only do women students then leave the course or program with tools for critical thinking, they also acquire very practical skills that are transferable to the workplace. Briggs and McBride make it clear that learning how to use the technology is not sufficient: once women have acquired the requisite skills, they must be encouraged to make use of these technologies to liberate themselves through, for instance, the development of women-centred websites. Thus, if women seem hesitant or lack the confidence to take on these kinds of technology successfully, then we, as feminist teachers, should do what we can to facilitate – to make it happen – by offering consistent support and feedback.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this topic, see J. Davies. (2004, March). Negotiating Femininities Online. *Gender and Education*, 16(1), 35-49; Y. Kafai, C. Heeter, J. Denner, & J.Y. Sun (Eds.). (2008). *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat: New Perspectives on Gender and Gaming*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Along the same lines, Whitehouse (2002), in her article, "Women's Studies Online: An Oxymoron?" reflects on her experience(s) teaching women's studies in what is referred to as a distributed learning environment; in other words, she incorporated both online and in-class learning. In Whitehouse's class, an online course component is instrumental from the start. Students are asked to contribute to a who's who page, where they can report on their progress throughout the course (Whitehouse, 2002). Again, we find a feminist educator who is committed to both critical reflection and computer skill building: students learn how to construct a simple webpage about themselves as they create a space where they can reflect on what they have learned and how it may relate to their own experience. As Whitehouse (2002) writes, "The Who's Who page allows students to extend the notion of the self beyond the first face-to-face impression and to change and grow as they explore new territories of thought and learn to challenge the status quo" (p. 218).

This is an example of how integrating technology into the curriculum can encourage a different, albeit complementary, kind of theoretical work than is done in a traditional classroom, work that is inherently feminist in its attention to shifting positionalities and collaborative learning and knowledge production within a virtual environment. The success of Whitehouse's who's who page suggests that women *do* want to claim spaces of their own on the Internet. They simply need to be given the resources and an outlet to experiment and, thus, challenge the perception that women are easily discouraged and unmotivated when it comes to learning new programs. Whitehouse, drawing on her personal experiences working in the field, offers feminist educators different options that blur the lines between virtual and physical classrooms.

Technologies such as the Internet may also bridge the gap between feminist educators and students, transcend geographical borders and physical locations, and result in new opportunities for feminist networking and political organizing. Indeed, educators such as Allahyarii (2002) are using the Internet to encourage feminist cyberactivism. Allahyarii developed a project that required her students to complete work placements with various feminist organizations. Throughout the semester, students submitted and uploaded their field notes onto the Internet in a process that Allahyarii refers to as cyber-ethnography. Reflecting on her experience using cyberspace as a tool for feminist coalition building, Allahyarii comes to the conclusion that her students left the course armed with valuable technological skills and insight into the relationship between cyberspace and women's political organizing or the social relation between the online and offline worlds.

Indeed, cyberspace has come to play an important and even necessary role in feminist organizing and networking, to which the ever growing list of online feminist websites can attest; for instance, the third-wave feminist site *grrrlzines.net* contains a detailed list of various grassroots and mainstream feminist and women's groups from around the globe. Again, we see how combining feminist teaching practices with new technologies not only inspires the facilitation of feminist theory and learning but also upholds both feminist praxis ideals and a long-standing commitment to coalition building between feminism in academia and the broader community. These examples suggest that cyberspace is altering how we as feminist educators approach teaching our students key concepts and theories in women's studies and suggest that distance learning and feminist pedagogy, when combined, have the potential to empower our students in ways that will stick with them well beyond the end of the semester or graduation.

Debates about gender and technology are not limited to questions about curriculum or course design in distance teaching, for feminist educators have raised the stakes of the debate to consider more foundational problems. For instance, in their study on gender and online learning, Hanson, Flansberg, and Castano (2004), found that cyberspace is far from gender neutral and may, in fact, simply mask problems of difference. Based on their

research findings, they concluded that many men replicate real-life behavioural traits associated with stereotypical masculinity (e.g., rough and impersonal), whereas women reinforce behaviour attributed to femininity (e.g., cooperation rather than competition). Their findings suggest that students tend to utilize CMCs in a manner that more often conforms to, rather than challenges, gender norms and expectations (Hanson et al., 2004). Hanson et al. argue that much more research needs to be done on online learning environments to ensure that women, as the major targets for CMC-based education (for reasons that I will address in the next section), are getting what they need. These issues also lead to questions and concerns about the ways the hidden curriculum is functioning in online learning; for instance, is it reinforcing gender, class, and racial stereotypes (Klebesadel, 2004)?<sup>2</sup> Clearly, feminist educators have much to offer in terms of a gendered analysis of technology, especially as it comes to play a more prominent role in the creation and delivery of distance education and serves to maintain gendered differences in learning styles.

There is a lot we can learn from the diverse ways in which feminist teachers are using technologies, both in the traditional classroom setting and in entirely web-based or distance learning. For instance, the way we teach or educate our students about feminism may have to be altered, depending on whether it is done through face-to-face interaction or, say, online chatting (referred to as synchronous or 'in real time' learning) or blogging (referred to as asynchronous learning, considered more flexible and 'convenient' for the student).

As Johnson (2004) suggests, "Distance Ed programs often employ traditional pedagogical frameworks rather than developing alternative instructional models that may be more effective for distance education courses" (para. 2). Finally, any discussion of technology also entails a discussion about its economic costs, not just personal ones, especially when women, who are the main audience for distance education, tend to be overrepresented in the lower rungs of the socio-economic realm (Nawratil, 1999). Indeed, technology is but one of many issues and concerns for female distance students.

## STUDENT NEEDS

Although the role of technology in learning is of critical importance to feminist educators, another overarching concern for distance educators is the lack of attention paid to the specific needs of female students, particularly in the form of institutional and familial support. The numbers of Canadian women attending university and colleges has increased significantly in the past thirty years, and women are now well represented at all levels of postsecondary education (i.e., undergrad and graduate programs). This trend continues within distance education: women are currently the fastest-growing sector of online distance education users (Johnson, 2004). However, women have always been highly represented within distance education courses and programs, both in Canada and the United States. Scholars have also shown that women's enrollment in virtual faculties is expanding globally (Marković & Marković, 2007). According to the largest facilitator of distance education and online learning in Canada, Athabasca University, sixty-seven percent of the student population are female ("Our Students", para. 3).

Research sponsored by Statistics Canada details this trend further in its comparative analysis of distance and non-distance students. It concluded that the average distance education student is likely to be a young, unmarried female who lives in rural areas outside of central Canada and holds a lower socio-economic and professional status than

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<sup>2</sup> According to the *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*, 'hidden curriculum' refers to "the learned, although not openly intended, outcomes or byproducts of schools or nonschool settings," and these learned outcomes may consist of "worldviews, character traits, cognitive states, emotions, attitudes, values" (Martin, 2000, 247). With regard to feminist educators, much attention on the hidden curriculum has centred on the androcentric and sexist structure and content of education for young girls and women.



students who are not in distance education programs (Burke, 1998). Yet, as Kramarae (2003) points out, "Women in online learning have the paradoxical experience of being simultaneously invisible – even while they are the core constituency of distance learning" (p. 270). So how, as feminist educators, should we respond to the needs of our female students?

We should first consider the communication needs of our female students. Do they differ from male students? There is some (albeit conflicting) evidence to suggest that men and women often exhibit preferences or predispositions towards particular learning and communication styles. Some feminist researchers have suggested, for example, that female students prefer email to the telephone as their main mode of tutor contact (Cragg, Andrusyszyn, & Fraser, 2005). The dizzying amount of student emails received by the new Tutor Marker for the distance education course that I am currently supervising substantiates this suggestion.

The researchers also found, based on their survey results, that the student-tutor relationship was very important to female students, as was interaction with other students, along with support and orientation for technology and well-working equipment (Cragg et al., 2005). Although there are some obstacles preventing the full and proper implementation of, say, well-working equipment (many women's studies programs do not have the budget to finance such things), instructors may be able to find other ways to address these needs, such as initiating contact with students and checking in regularly to monitor their progress.

Another important student need is linked to diversity within the curriculum as well as within the student body. Due to the virtual nature of distance education, and based upon my own experiences, instructors should anticipate a broad mixture of students, some of whom may be studying in another region or even another country. Moreover, the students may be completely new to the discipline of women's studies, which may leave them feeling frustrated with, and isolated from, the class. Cultures may clash as well, especially if the student is unfamiliar with the expectations associated with the course and the institution. As May (1994) revealed in her study of nine distance education students in Women's Studies at Athabasca University, there can be regrettable consequences for both students and teachers when cultural sensitivity as a pedagogical issue is overlooked or underestimated. Based on in-depth, personal interviews, May found that one student, a Canadian Aboriginal woman, dropped the course because her cultural upbringing conflicted with the feminist praxis of critical thinking. When May inquired into the matter, she found that the young woman had been taught that to be overly critical was disrespectful and inappropriate.

Although knowing this in advance may not have prevented this conflict from happening, having students prepare a writing assignment at the beginning of the course asking them to explore their personal histories and how they relate to the course could have been one way to access this information, thereby enabling the instructor to make adjustments or to speak specifically to these differences. Moreover, as Spronk and Radtke (1988) have noted, Aboriginal women may have specific needs that standard distance education programs may not be properly equipped to deal with. Some of these concerns can be addressed at the level of course design, while larger problems such as those related to cost, delivery mode(s), and academic requirements may exacerbate accessibility issues for women of lower socio-economic status or marginalized culture groups. As feminist educators, we do not want to further marginalize women who already face barriers to their learning; therefore, some of these aforementioned issues must be dealt with at the institutional level, not just the department level.

One particular challenge faced by many women students of distance education is time management and multitasking. At any given moment, women are performing any number of roles -mother, wife-partner, employee, and so on.

Cragg, Andrusyszyn, and Fraser (2005) found that the mean number of roles fulfilled by women while studying was six. This suggests that women are often constrained by when, how, and where their learning takes place. For better or worse, women's mobility issues have therefore, made them an attractive target for online courses, helping to create a niche market of distance learners, while overlooking the structural inequalities that create these constraints in the first place.

Kramarae (2003) has suggested that rather than simply providing solutions for female learners at the micro level, much work needs to be done at the macro level, such as providing students with accessible and affordable daycare, which would give women the option of attending traditional classes, distance education, or a combination of both.

Gendered assumptions about the concept of time are built into distance education: in-class (public) time is constructed according to a linear understanding of time (masculine), while a more feminine model that values process and multitasking is embedded within the (privatized) distance education model (Kramarae, 2005).

Moreover, we need to consider how men and women experience the public and private realms as gendered spaces. Raddon (2007) discovered in her study of distance education students in the United Kingdom that men and women approach their studies in very different ways, depending on their gender perceptions and gender roles within and outside the home -that is, women are still primarily responsible for domestic work, which gives men more flexibility to pursue their studies.

As Moss (2004) notes, women's "personal space and time for higher education has to be carved from space and time for other things and from space and time that is often in the control of other people" (p. 299). Therefore, we need to pay attention to the contexts of women's learning, namely, when and where are they doing their studies? How do their daily routines, family responsibilities, and socio-economic status position them as distance learners? These are the kinds of questions we need to consider; otherwise distance education becomes part of the problem, one that contributes to women's social inequalities by perpetuating women's roles as primarily wives and mothers relegated to the domestic sphere. Therefore, some critics have posited that distance education should be viewed as a temporary fix rather than the solution to women's educational challenges and struggles. Distance education should not prevent women from returning to land classes (Guymer, 1999) if they so desire.

All of this indicates that feminist educators should pay attention to the questions of diversity and difference, time management, and curriculum within the context of their students' busy and fragmented lives. Have we been sensitive to needs that are based on cultural, lifestyle, and financial differences? Of course, educators cannot be held solely responsible for all of these types of concerns, but we can make a concerted effort to help ameliorate some of them.

## CONCLUSION

I have reviewed some of the literature on feminism and distance learning, paying particular attention to the role of distance education within the discipline of women's studies. I have highlighted some of the important insights and contributions of this work to show that, ultimately, distance education has much to offer more traditional feminist pedagogy frameworks, which tend to use the physical classroom as their point of reflection. The goal of my review was to shed light on some problems that might

otherwise remain unexplored within the traditional women's studies classroom, such as technology-driven learning. Yet, I have by no means exhausted all topics, such as other specific needs-based issues, as well as cultural sensitivity.

Based on this critical review, I conclude that there are three main issues that practitioners of feminist pedagogy need to contend with when they work in a distance education setting. First, we need to recontextualize our conception of feminist pedagogy to include the virtual classroom. As noted in the research discussed in this paper, gender, race, and class inequalities are reproduced in many online learning environments. Educators need to be aware of and monitor this trend constantly. Second, with women constituting a large percentage of students in distance education courses and programs (and growing globally), feminist research and pedagogical practices will provide necessary and much needed strategies and frameworks to ensure that policies and practices take into consideration the special needs of women across diverse ethnic, cultural, class, and educational backgrounds. Of course, the support and cooperation of university administrators is a crucial ingredient if changes are to be made for the long term.

Finally, although there has been much debate amongst feminists regarding the increasing use, reliance, and visibility of computer-mediated learning, and although many of these arguments contribute valid insights, ultimately it is the women who use these technologies who should have the final say in their implementation and use. Constant feedback from female students will be a necessary element in the growth and creation of future feminist distance education research and development. Their feedback will ensure that this work stays firmly grounded within the everyday practices and experiences of female adult learners. Clearly, as the creative and insightful literature has shown in this essay, feminist educators are up to the challenge, proving that the advancement of women in distance education is not just a question of pedagogy – it is one of equality and social justice.

As for the tools of our trade, it seems vitally important for us to stay on top of technological changes in adult learning because they expand our educational options and remind us not to become complacent with our pedagogical practices. Indeed, teaching women's studies within a distance education model offers insight and challenges about how we do, teach, and learn feminism. Finally, it is imperative that feminist scholars continue to research and debate distance education for the benefit of both the discipline and the broader study of distance education.

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## TEACHING MEN FEMINISM BY DISTANCE EDUCATION: Perspectives, Challenges and the Way Forward

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the issues surrounding teaching men feminism particularly via the medium of online, distance learning. Increasingly, tertiary institutions in the Caribbean are adopting online learning as the way forward to ensure that its citizens are well equipped to enter the global workforce. There is also a move towards increasing the number of tertiary educated males, who are in the minority in many universities and tertiary level intuitions. By focusing on a lesser known area in the research on gender pedagogy and distance learning, this paper highlights the importance of studying the particular challenges and benefits of teaching men feminist theory. This is mainly achieved through data garnered from a sample of learners themselves, and as such is largely a qualitative paper which taps into the narratives of these men as its major source. The personal experience of the author in the area of coordinating an online distance programme also proves to be an interesting perspective for the work. This is buttressed by literature from the leading researchers and academics in the area of distance learning and feminist theorizing and pedagogy.

The paper argues that there are unique challenges and benefits in teaching men feminist theory and highlights the benefits and drawbacks of doing so online. It also suggests ways in which the challenges may be surmounted in order to facilitate an increased number of men who are interested in investing in online education and particularly those with an interest in gender studies. "Despite the long history of men's involvement in feminism, I've learned over the years that telling someone, anyone that I am a feminist is bound to have a startling effect. The responses vary, but they usually involve questions, such as "what do you mean?" often accompanied by some stuttered expressions of doubt about whether it is possible for a man to be a feminist, perhaps whether it is even logically possible...women's embarrassment seems to centre on how my being a feminist diminishes my manliness, while men seem to think I'm crazy." (Digby, 1998, p. 1.)

**Keywords:** Gender, women education, distance education, feminism.

### INTRODUCTION

It is open secret that gender studies courses are mainly taught and learned by women. Feminism is "the awareness of the oppression, exploitation and/or subordination of women within society and the conscious action to change and transform that society" (Reddock, 1998) and was initially seen as for and by women only. The second wave of feminism in the 1960s, envisioned women theorizing about their domination outside the presence of the 'oppressor'. As Judith Gardiner argues "the women's liberation movement... assumed an antagonism between feminism and masculinity." [Gardiner, 2002, p. 2] This antagonism was two-way as 'masculinist' movements "argued that women's increased power was symptomatic of cultural changes that had reduced the importance and visibility and masculinity." (Kimmel, 1987, p. 269). This segregation lost traction with the third wave of feminism in the 1990s and profeminist men's movements. As Hooks opines, "feminist struggle takes place anytime anywhere any female or male resists sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression." (Hooks, 2000).

Increasingly, men have shown interest in studying the ideological and biological binaries of masculinity and femininity.

The response to men studying feminism varies. Some instructors will welcome them, hoping that they will try to stem discrimination against women in their purview. Still, others view them with suspicion since they are beneficiaries of a structure which privileges masculinity. The average person on the street (particularly in the Caribbean) will invariably question their sexuality since men who are closely related to femininity are surely homosexuals. These are the range of issues facing men who opt to study feminism and those who teach them. It is my view that if we hope to create a society which does not privilege one gender over another, and if we are truly committed to a future for education that includes equal participation for our males, then men cannot be left out of the dialogue. I also believe that the online space affords some advantages over face to face interaction where this is concerned as it affords some 'anonymity' and an encouraging environment in which they are exposed to a conscious-raising pedagogy that empowers them to make a difference.

### CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF THE IGDS DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

The Caribbean has had a history of impressive tertiary education, starting with the University College of the West Indies, an adjunct to the University of London in 1948 (University of the West Indies [UWI] since 1962). It has 3 campuses in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados. The region is now populated by other highly rated tertiary institutions and distance learning programmes. UWI, for instance launched its Open Campus in 2008, as a virtual campus which offers multi-mode teaching services through 42 site locations serving 16 countries in the English-speaking Caribbean. It is within this campus that the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) offers its undergraduate Diploma in Gender and Development Studies which I have coordinated since October 2008. Since its origin in 2003, this 18 month programme has met the demand for knowledge in gender studies among persons in the Caribbean region who were unable to take up face to face courses. The programme is designed to provide participants with an understanding of gender and its influence on all spheres of life and its impact on development. There are no exams in this programme, in keeping with our commitment to authentic assessment. (Fook, 2008, p. 2). The philosophy of the programme is learner centred in focus. Guided by Barr and Tagg's "learning paradigm," (Barr and Tagg, 1995). learning is viewed as going beyond acquiring information and skills but to developing the type of understanding that empowers the learner to challenge existing social inequalities.

Not surprisingly, the enrollment of men in this programme is very low. We have not had more than 2 men in each cohort (which usually includes 8-15 persons), and in some groups there were no men at all. Indeed, one of the main challenges facing tertiary institutions in the Caribbean is the ratio of men to women. At UWI Mona, 70% of graduates are women. (Figueroa, 2004). While administrators are pleased that women are taking up opportunities for tertiary education, they are concerned that men seem less interested. This under-representation of men in education is perhaps rooted in our socialization as boys focus on accessing money rather than spending years in educational pursuits.

As Barry Chevannes notes: "school is girl stuff!" This declaration by an eight-year old inner city boy...reveals the association of meaning built up in the minds of many boys...Training in survival through deprivation and harsh treatment and constructing male identity through provider roles are ...factors that give girls a school advantage." (Chevannes, 1999).



## **MEN AND FEMINISM: The Issues of Teaching and Learning**

The men involved in the Diploma Programme expressed various reasons for enrolling. For some it was the realization that job opportunities in gender were growing, the need to learn something new, and the desire to balance the treatment of women in their societies. Some noted that their friends were curious but supportive of the move. In another case, both male and female colleagues were cynical and suggested other educational alternatives. Interestingly one respondent noted that he was the one with the problem: "during the early stages, I felt somewhat odd telling people about the course, mainly because of my biased perception gained during my stages of development."

In the Caribbean, where homophobia is often violently manifested, getting men interested in gender studies is particularly challenging. The students did acknowledge that their sexuality was often questioned, and a student noted he had to "constantly reassert my masculinity in defense of heterosexuality since there is a discrete suspicion that men who do gender courses embrace homosexual inclinations. The popular belief is that "real men don't study gender" (Brod, 2002, p. 161). and stems from the idea that men typically do not see themselves as gendered but 'normal'. (Holmgren, and Hearn, 2009, p. 403).

The students reported an excellent working relationship with their female instructors and classmates. Each person was given an opportunity to post an opinion and the discussions in asynchronous and synchronous chat rooms were said to be "stimulating." This is often times not the case in a face to face environment, where smirks, side-bar comments and other "real time" negative responses militate against openness mixed gender classrooms. As Magda Lewis reports, sexual dynamics in the face to face feminist classroom often leads to tensions and threatening situations. (Lewis, 1992). In our experience however, the online environment allows for a frank yet 'filtered' response which makes for less tense situation. When asked if they noticed any negative treatment when compared to female classmates, most said no. They noted that the women did not seem to think their space was being invaded. This is not to say that there were no differences of opinion. Indeed, one respondent noted that "there were occasions when some seemingly covert remarks were made when I pushed on a point too strongly." However this was the exception, as most thought that their perspective was actually more encouraged because of their gender. As a student noted "what made gender courses exciting for me is that because the issues were predominately female, the lectures and students encouraged a male perspective." Another shared: "interestingly, I thought female lecturers would be quick to embarrass or disregard males but they have all proven me wrong."

For some respondents, their view of feminist theory remained fairly consistent before and after the programme. One in particular noted that feminism represented for him, a vehicle of social awareness and ultimately change. However, most noted that their views about feminists were challenged in the course. Before doing this programme, many saw feminists as "bitter people who wanted to be like men, who hated men with a passion." This fits the stereotypical view of bra burning, man hating feminist perpetrated by western ideologies. This is not to say that there was not a space for angry revolution, but this monolithic and misguided view, has militated against many seeing the worth of feminist insights.

The respondent noted that after the course "my perspective changed significantly. I have now become much more liberal and respecting of the rights of females who have been subordinated by a system of patriarchy." They all lauded the programme as an "eye opener", and therefore, our goal of consciousness-raising via an online medium has seemingly been achieved.

Respondents also revealed that studying feminist theory resulted in feelings of shame for the atrocities of patriarchy. As one noted "I never knew the extent to which men had put the entire world to work in their favour...I was ashamed." This is not uncommon for men who gain feminist awareness and while useful to an extent, it must be managed carefully in the online environment. It is not useful to invite men to learn feminist theory and rob them of their sense of self. As Connors has argued, "we have been told by many sources that the problems of this world arise from machismo... and the natural consequence of hearing this line so consistently is that we shrink from considerations of ourselves as... representative of manhood." (Connors, 1996, p. 144). Instead of challenging the core of their identity, men doing feminism may be better instructed to use this for good rather than cower in fear of its power and potentially dangerous effects.

As feminist educators, we "all attempt...to create pedagogical situations which 'empower' students, demystify canonical knowledge, and clarify how relations of domination subordinate subjects." (Luke, and Gore, 1992, p. 1). Overall I believe this has been achieved with this programme, where we transform skeptics into profeminist men. Respondents were impressed with the commitment of their instructors to keep the online learning environment alive. They became conscious of their subtle negative behavior towards women, and refocused their attention to ways in which they can bring about change. At the same time however, they expressed that not enough focus was placed on the issues of masculinity. They noted that they Caribbean male should be a subject for study to ascertain how they "treat with notions of power, influence and respect among themselves" and suggested that if there was a greater focus on masculinities, more men would be interested in the programme.

## CONCLUSION

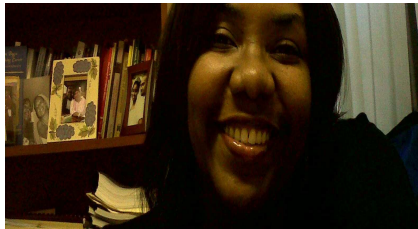
Having a male perspective in a feminist classroom can be a powerful tool for teaching and learning. As a respondent noted, "men need to be encouraged to determine a space within feminism that is not limited to oppositional positions". If we adhere to the poststructuralist ideal that rejects unitary truths, then we should welcome the opinions of men as it relates to feminism to foster commonalities and eliminate essentialist differences. As Patrick Hopkins argues, "feminism should be about gender and the structures of sexism that arise from hierarchical evaluations of gender, not about the problematic ahistorical category of woman per se." (Hopkins, 1998, p. 51). However, if we focus heavily on masculinities in the feminist space, we risk "leveling structures of power by granting to men's studies an equal and complementary place to women's studies." (Robinson, 2002, p.143). In seeking men's views we must still maintain the space for woman studies and not overlook the fact that women's oppression still exists.

While our programme is not without its challenges, I have found the student centeredness of online education as advantageous in the study of feminist theory. Persons are guided by tutors, but are given freer rein to interpret the information in their own way, and contribute to lively discussion without fear of comments and body language that hint of intolerance, which are so often evident in traditional classrooms.

It also allows for equal opportunities to air unpopular views instead of risk being overshadowed by a more dominant voice. For those who struggle with teaching feminism in a face to face setting, they may consider blending the delivery using online aspects to enhance open-mindedness towards divergent views and meaningful discussion towards a common goal of gender equality and empowerment.

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## **TEACHING STAFF' ATTITUDE TOWARD ICT: Is Gender A Factor?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Current research seeks to understand whether gender is a factor that should be considered when considering teaching staff' attitude toward Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Survey methodology is facilitated through the use of the questionnaires. The survey domain is a random sampling of teaching staff in Egyptian higher education institutions (HEI). The population for this study was 500 full-time Faculty staff, only 412 returned and complete questionnaires are considered as the study sample. The results showed that no difference between being a male or a female as regard to the attitude toward ICT among teaching staff in Egyptians HEI; thus, gender is not a significant factor when considering attitude toward ICT by teaching staff members in Egyptians HEI. The result of this research has significant implications to HEI when they plan, develop, and adopt ICT; thus, HEI has to consider that teaching staff' attitude toward ICT is not related to their gender.

**Keywords:** ICT, Higher Education, Teaching Staff, Attitude toward ICT, gender.

### **INTRODUCTION**

ICT has become an important part of the majority of organizations and businesses in order to maintain a competitive edge. Since ICT has to be accepted and used successfully by its intended users, research stream on investigating issues related to the attitude toward ICT has become one of the most creative, and also claimed to be one of the most mature research areas (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). Educational institutions should be highly computerized, and all teachers should be able to use the technology to enhance their working methods (Key Data on Information and Communication Technology in Schools in Europe, 2004).

ICT are the tools for change and innovation and its educational value was confirmed (Williams, 2003). Moreover, ICT are seen as important tools of advancement. One of the most critical issues in developing and maximizing the benefits of ICT in teaching and learning work is the level of confidence and acceptance of academic staff in using ICT to gain its benefits in their work. Milbrath and Kinzie (2000) indicated that in order to be effective users of ICT and be models for students' computer use, teaching staff must have positive computer attitudes and feels self-efficacious in using them.

In the modern era, ICT plays a crucial role in the way the societies functions. The future of the society's prosperity is strongly correlated with ICT integration in every aspect of life. Moreover, ICT offers possibilities for improving competitiveness among organizations; they provide tools and methods for getting access to new opportunities and specialized information services such as distance education, continuous training, new advisory and consultancy modes. Organizations that are able to exploit the potentials offered by ICT can handle innovative processes more effectively (Fulantelli & Allegra, 2003).

The literature contains evidence that there is a difference between males and females as regard to several issues. Technological progress aims at improving the standard of living of people. Yet not all people will in general benefit equally from that progress. It is

obvious that for women the enhancement of their life is not always visible. In many societies, because of traditional role patterns, there frequently are clear obstacles in a society which causes that both sexes do not benefit equally from the advantages of the technological progress in general.

Traditional social ways of thinking cause many of these barriers as females have a lower social position and fewer opportunities than males. Furthermore, females have a more share in reproductive and household tasks. As a consequence, females in general have less access to power, education and productive sources than males, and thus fewer options to cooperate productively in the society (McGregor & Bazi, 2001).

Sustainability of advancement greatly depends on the flexibility to adapt the existing social structure, and thus may be delayed by the strength of these barriers. In order to make developing work sustainable, re-examination of the existing societal structures therefore is of great importance. A fair representation of females is essential to guarantee the basic access to the new innovations (Primo, 2003).

Yu (2002) studied the need for ICT in developing countries and why gender issues play an essential role in this regard. He focused on the relationship between attitudes toward ICT in relation with gender. He concluded that gender-sensitive aspects play a central role. He declared that gender needs special attention in the context of the technological fast changes. The challenges are on the issue of creating an environment in which a harmonious and justified cooperation between both sexes is of great importance for a positive development in general and in particular on the area of ICT.

While the literature has a number of research studies supporting higher education faculty perception of adopting technology in general (Albright, 1996; Jacobsen, 1997; Straub, 2009; Sugar et al., 2004), a very limited research existed to highlight and focuses on the nature of the relationship between teaching staff' gender and their attitude toward ICT in Egypt; thus more research is warranted in this regard in order to highlight the effect of gender on teaching staff attitude toward ICT.

The research believes that the key to successful integration of ICT into education is teaching staff; thus investigating factors directly related to their attitude toward ICT is significantly important. This investigation and analysis aims to adding to the limited literature regarding the direct relationship between HEI teaching staff' gender and their attitude toward ICT.

The term 'gender' will be used according to the description of (McGregor & Bazi, 2001): "Whereas the sex of an individual is biologically determined, gender refers to the socially constructed definition of females and males and the relationship between them. Gender is culture-specific and also varies over time. It determines the conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in society, in both public and private life".

## RELATED RESEARCH

Adams (2002), in one of the studies that showed gender concerns, he studied full and part-time faculty members teaching at a HEI, he indicated that females display a greater integration average than do males. Adams concluded that younger female teachers with less teaching experience more readily integrate technology into teaching practices.

In the same context, Kumar et al. (2008) declared that it is important to investigate the factors that affect teaching staff use of ICT. In their research, they discovered that,

among other factors, gender have important effects of the actual use of ICT by teaching staff. This result is supported by a more recent research of Sang et al. (2009).

Brosnan (1998) concluded that males showed more positive attitudes toward ICT than females do. In the same context, Graff (2003) declared that females were less likely to use ICT and were less confident in using ICT than males do. Moreover, Palaigeorgiou et al. (2005) also confirmed that both males and females had similar engagement with ICT and held concerns for the future effects of continuous computer use, but females were more concerned, and judged less positively the consequences of ICT in personal and social life.

Papaioannou and Charalambous (2011) in their study explored the impact of gender on the attitudes toward ICT. The study found that both male and female hold positive attitudes toward ICT with males having stronger positive attitudes than their female colleagues. Also, Ainley and Enger (2007) discovered that regarding gender, males have more positive attitudes toward ICT.

Whitley's (1996) study concluded that both males and females hold positive attitudes toward ICT, but there is a small gender difference on negative attitudes for females being more anxious about the negative impact of computers on society.

Contradicting with previous studies, Warg et al. (2000) in their investigation for the possible differences between genders regarding attitude toward ICT, they did not find any significant differences. Moreover, Intaganok et al. (2008) concluded that gender was insignificant factor and did not affect attitude toward ICT and ICT competence. However, it worth mentioning that there are some recent research studies, which revealed that the gender gap between males and females is shrinking or does no longer exist (Bhattacharjee, 2008; Imhof, Vollmeyer, & Beierlein, 2007; Teo, 2008; Intaganok et al., 2008). From the previous illustrations, we can conclude that studies on attitude toward ICT have gone through ups and downs yielding conflicting and questionable findings on the relationship between attitude toward ICT and gender differences; thus requiring further focused investigations.

## METHODOLOGY

Current research seeks to understand the relationship between teaching staff' gender and their attitude toward ICT. Survey methodology is facilitated through the use of the questionnaire technique, which was employed in this research.

Oscarson (1976) scale to measure adoption-proneness was used to aid in understanding this relationship. Adoption of the proneness scale measurement was used in this study after major modifications due to the conduct of a pilot study and instrument testing conducted by Elsaadani (2011) in order to ensure that the questions used reflect the intended meaning of the researcher and to ensure that this meaning will be understood by anyone reading these questions. So, the instrument is therefore valid. A follow-up pilot study was conducted in 2011 before the start of the spring semester with a sample of teaching staff. This pilot study sample comprised 25 Faculty staff, with a return rate of 80%. The responses from this pilot sample did not request any further modifications to the instrument. Analysis of quantitative data is processed with the aid of SPSS 19.0 program to produce research findings.

The survey domain is a random sampling of teaching staff in Egyptian HEI. The research is aware of the dangers of selection bias of the study participants, thus, a draw was made as a type of blind selection in order to ensure fairness in the selection among the full list of universities, faculties, and disciplines.

A table with a randomly selected teaching staff members was generated from each faculty's human resources department containing fifty of their teaching staff members to share in the study after taking the permission to do so from each university administration.

The population for this study was 500 full-time Faculty staff. The research used the total population as the survey target participants, and 414 participants responded, but only 412 are complete and usable questionnaires, and are considered as the study sample. Selection criteria for study participants were based on teaching staff members who teach courses during the spring semester of 2011.

Resulting data were analyzed using test of normality of questionnaire data (PP plot), reliability test (Cronbach alpha), validity test (principal component factor analysis), descriptive analysis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. Independent samples *t* test was conducted in order to confirm the result.

Descriptive analysis is employed in order to determine the frequencies of the variables. Both Cronbach alpha and principal component factor analysis are used with both the piloted and the final version of the instrument in order to ensure that the instrument is reliable and valid.

One-way ANOVA is employed in order to determine whether several sets of scores have different means or not, and to determine the relationships among variables. Correlation is used with piloted data in order to ensure both criterion and construct validity.

Unvaried analysis of variance is employed in order to see whether changes in the independent variable have significant effect on the dependent variable or not, but the degree of that change is determined using regression analysis. Cronbach alpha is used with both the piloted and the final version of the instrument in order to ensure that the instrument is reliable.

Test on normality is conducted at the beginning in order to determine whether random variables are normally distributed or not, since this enhances the application of statistical tests applicable to normal distribution variables. The probability level for all tests of statistical significance for the study will be set at  $p < 0.05$ .

## RESULTS

This research focuses only on the relationship between gender and attitude toward ICT, rest of questionnaire analysis reported elsewhere. Test on normality is conducted at the beginning, and it was determined that the used variables are normally distributed; thus it is acceptable to use the statistical tests applicable to normal distribution variables.

Gender of the participating members was male participants representing 64%, while female participants representing 36%.

Reliability Case Processing for 412 participants using Cronbach's Alpha for attitude toward ICT (19 items) scored 0.840, use of ICT in teaching (21 items) scored 0.828, judgment about ICT use (six items) scored 0.783, professional development of Faculty staff (six items) scored 0.701, ICT support services (six items) scored 0.783, and barriers to adopting and using ICT (29 items) scored 0.862. While Cronbach's Alpha reliability for the entire instrument scored 0.771. Thus, reliability was proved for the used survey instrument and its internal consistency is acceptable.



Principal component factor analysis was used to assess convergent and discriminant validity. Most loading within variable were greater than 0.80, while most loading across variables were less than 0.30, indicating good convergent and discriminant validity.

Resulting data were analyzed using test of normality of questionnaire data (PP plot), reliability test (Cronbach alpha), validity test (principal component factor analysis), descriptive analysis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. Independent samples *t* test was conducted in order to confirm the result. Findings revealed that gender is not a factor when considering attitude toward ICT.

Four hundred and twelve higher education teaching staff members (64.1% male and 35.9% females; with mean=1.36 years, SD=0.480) were investigated. The mean attitude toward ICT scored 85.26 showing that respondents have positive attitudes toward ICT as shown in tables 1 and 2.

**Table: 1**  
**Gender Frequencies**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	264	64.1	64.1	64.1
Female	148	35.9	35.9	100.0
Total	412	100.0	100.0	

**Table: 2**  
**Attitude toward ICT & Gender Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitude toward ICT	412	85.26	11.466
What is your gender?	412	1.36	0.480
Valid N (listwise)	412		

Analysis done using One-way Analysis of Variance showed insignificant difference between gender and the attitude toward ICT ( $F(1, 410) = 0.809, P = 0.369$ ) as shown in table 3.

**Table: 3**  
**Analysis of Variance (Gender & Attitude toward ICT)**

**ANOVA**

Attitude toward ICT					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	106.370	1	106.370	0.809	0.369
Within Groups	53926.841	410	131.529		
Total	54033.211	411			

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Attitude toward ICT					
Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	106.370 <sup>a</sup>	1	106.370	.809	.369
Intercept	2994917.789	1	2994917.789	22770.039	.000
Gender	106.370	1	106.370	.809	.369
Error	53926.841	410	131.529		
Total	3048951.000	412			

**ANOVA**

**Attitude toward ICT**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	106.370	1	106.370	0.809	0.369
Within Groups	53926.841	410	131.529		
Corrected Total	54033.211	411			

a. R Squared=.002 (Adjusted R Squared=.000)

Pearson correlation among gender and attitude toward ICT is negative and insignificant ( $r = -0.044$ ,  $p = 0.369$ ) as shown in table 4, which support the concluded achieved result that there is no relationship between gender and attitude toward ICT. Regression factor ( $R = 0.044$ ) is minor, while the determinant factor ( $R \text{ Square} = 0.002$ ), which is the percentage of change in the attitude toward ICT that is explained by gender (see table 5).

**Table: 4**  
**Pearson Correlation Matrix (Gender & Attitude toward ICT)**  
**Correlations**

		What is your gender?	Attitude toward ICT
What is your gender?	Pearson Correlation	1	-.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.369
	N	412	412
Attitude toward ICT	Pearson Correlation	-.044	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.369	
	N	412	412

**Table: 5**  
**Regression Analysis (Gender & Attitude toward ICT)**

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.044 <sup>a</sup>	.002	.000	11.469

a. Predictors: (Constant), What is your gender?

**CONCLUSION**

New innovative educational technologies are now replacing traditional educational means. These new innovations are doing much more than simply delivering regular lectures. Although, today HEI are increasingly using ICT as a means to improve teaching and learning, the current study adds to the limited literature on the nature of the relationship between teaching staff' gender and their attitude toward ICT in HEI within the Egyptian context. The main strength of the current study is that it provides up-to-date information about this relationship and communicates this information to the administration of HEI in Egypt.

The results showed that there is no significant difference exists between the gender of participants and their attitude toward ICT; thus indicating no relationship between both of them. Independent samples *t* test was conducted in order to confirm the result. Mean of males is slightly higher than females, but the observed *t* is not significant; thus indicating no difference between males and females as regard to their attitude toward ICT (see tables 6 & 7).

**Table 6**  
**Gender & Attitude toward ICT Group Statistics**

What is your gender?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attitude toward ICT	Male	264	85.64	11.379	.700
	Female	148	84.58	11.627	.956

Table: 7  
Independent Samples Test (Gender & Attitude toward ICT)

	t-test for Equality of Means								
	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
							Lower	Upper	
Attitude toward ICT	.826	.049	.899	410	.369	1.059	1.178	1.256	3.374
			.894	299.060	.372	1.059	1.185	1.273	3.391

Regression factor determined to be minor, and the determinant factor (R Square) showed the percentage of change in the attitude toward ICT that is explained by gender differences. This study concluded that in considering attitude toward ICT by teaching staff members in Egyptians HEI, gender is not a significant factor.

The concluding results of the study indicating that there is no relationship between teaching staff gender and their attitude toward ICT. This same conclusion has been approved by many other previous studies (Warg et al., 2000; Intaganok et al., 2008; Bhattacharjee, 2008; Imhof et al., 2007; Teo, 2008; Intaganok et al., 2008).

The study found that both male and female hold positive attitudes toward ICT as no difference between box sexes.

This result could seem strange since a common idea is shared in almost all societies that males are using ICT more than females are. The result of this research has significant implications to HEI when they plan, develop, and adopt ICT. HEI has to consider that the teaching staff attitude toward ICT is not related to their gender.

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## **PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION IN RESEARCH: Towards Achieving Gender Equity in Higher Education**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The project on Gender Equity in Commonwealth Higher Education was initiated by the Institute of Education, University of London, conducted from April, 2003 to December, 2005 and funded by the Department of International Development and the Carnegie Foundation. The Project Coordinator was Professor Louise Morley and senior university academics from Nigeria, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Uganda participated with assistance from other researchers. The project examined gender equity interventions in access, curriculum and staff development. It targeted two Millennium Goals: Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Partnerships between rich and poor countries.

The paper describes how regular communication, meetings in respective countries, adaptation of research instruments to suit country contexts, common scheduling of activities and guidance and monitoring by the Project Coordinating Team enabled research partners to;

- make a significant contribution to knowledge on gender equity in higher education,
- enhance research capacity of junior researchers,
- disseminate study findings,
- raise awareness and initiate follow-up action on gender issues in higher education among policy makers and authorities and
- to promote multicultural understanding and the impact of cultures on gender equity in higher education.

**Keywords:** Gender Equity, International Development and the Carnegie Foundation, gender equity in higher education.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The third Millennium Development Goal (MDG 3) in the United Nation's Millennium Declaration is Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women. This Goal focuses on Target Four - Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015. The value which underlies the third MDG is equality. The global community recognizes that no individual must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.

Sri Lanka with a Human Development Index of 0.751 and a Gender Development Index of 0.747 is often cited as a success story. Sri Lanka has reached a high degree of success in ensuring equal access to educational opportunity - the cumulative result of the long-term vision of policymakers and their commitment to liberal-democratic policies in the early years of independence (Jayawardena, 1985; Jayaweera, 1985).

The system of free education from kindergarten to university level, introduced in 1945 has been complemented by a number of incentives and services like subsidized transport, free text books, free mid-day meals and free school uniforms that contributed towards reducing social and economic disparities.

At university level, there has been a gradual increase of women in enrolment. Thus female representation in total enrolment which was 42.9% in 1990/91, increased to 45.4 % in 1995/96 and to 53.6% in 2002. Women are visible in most disciplines but the majority is mainly in Arts-oriented disciplines. In Engineering the women are still a low minority.

At national level, no accurate data is available on the unemployment of graduates. In 1992, the total number registered in the Graduate Placement Scheme was around 12,000. In 1994, 1995 and 1996 the number registered in the Ministry of Youth Affairs were 11,364, 10,460 and 4,660 respectively. The data on unemployed graduates show that the graduates who mainly suffer unemployment are women (Table: 1).

**Table: 1**  
**Registered Unemployed Graduates by Sex (1994-2001)**

Year	Total	% Female
1994	11364	49.5
1995	10460	58.1
1996	4660	62.0
2001	25515	63.1
2004	40014	65.4

Source: Department of Census and Statistics (1997),  
University Grants Commission (2002) & Prof. V.K. Samaranayake,  
School of Computing, University of Colombo.

Throughout the period, except for Engineering, which enrolls a majority of men students, in all the other degrees the majority of the unemployed are women graduates. Similarly, the advancement of university women academics into senior academic positions has been quite slow in latter 1990s.

**Table: 2**  
**Distribution of University Academic Staff by Gender (1996 -2003)**

Grade	1996		1999		2003	
	Male	Female	Male%	Female%	Male %	Female %
Professor	88.7	11.3	85.0	15.0	77.8	22.2
Asso. Professor	78.6	21.4	72.0	28.0	78.7	11.3
Snr. Lecturer I	61.7	28.3	74.0	26.0	56.9	33.1
Snr. Lecturer II	58.5	31.5	66.0	34.0		
Lecturer	54.3	35.7	62.0	38.0	60.5	39.5

Source: Chitra Karunaratne (1996, 1999, 2003) CENWOR,  
Proceedings of the National Conventions on Women



The Sri Lankan context thus clearly showed that even while some targets of Gender Equality had been achieved yet there were other areas, especially at the levels of higher education, employment and empowerment, where little or no progress had been made.

The impetus to initiate a research study to interrogate and document the action that universities in five Commonwealth countries have been taken with regard to gender equity was a result of the realization that in spite of the interventions that were introduced at higher education level, the extent to which these interventions were effective or the outcomes of research studies carried out in developing countries were not well-documented. Three interventions on access, curriculum transformation and staff development were selected for the study and one University from each member country in the Project was selected as the research site. Partnerships and collaboration was an essential need to initiate the study and was continued as the study proceeded from the stage of seeking funding, planning and conduct to dissemination and follow-up action. Partnership and collaboration was ensured among;

- funders and research groups,
- universities and policy making bodies,
- academics, policy makers and national level women's organizations,
- university research teams from different universities in the same country and from Commonwealth countries,
- research teams and implementing bodies such as Staff Development Units.

Partnership and collaboration took place at different stages of the Project such as;

- project proposal preparation,
- (ii) development of data collection instruments,
- (iii) training on data collection and analysis in gender research
- (iv) clarification and feedback on research reports,
- (v) seeking avenues for and participation in dissemination and
- (vi) implementing interventions to work towards Gender Equity in Higher Education.

The paper describes how regular communication, meetings in respective countries, adaptation of research instruments to suit country contexts, common scheduling of activities and guidance and monitoring by the Project Coordinating Team enabled research partners, Sri Lanka in this instance, to:

- make a significant contribution to knowledge on gender equity in higher education,
- have access to essential equipment and software,
- enhance research capacity of junior researchers,
- disseminate study findings,
- raise awareness and initiate follow-up action on gender issues in higher education among policy makers and authorities and
- to promote multicultural understanding and awareness on the impact of cultures on gender equity in higher education.

The paper thus focuses on two Millennium Goals: Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Partnerships between rich and poor countries.

## **THE STUDY**

Three interventions were selected for the study in Sri Lanka: under access, the District Quota Scheme and the Mahapola Scholarships, which were equity interventions were studied while the Master of Women's Studies Programme and the gender courses in the Arts Faculty and the activities of the Staff Development Centre were studied under

curriculum transformation and staff development respectively. University of Colombo was the Sri Lankan University selected as the research site.

### **Partnership and Collaboration in Research**

#### **Initiation of the Research Project**

The collaborative cross-cultural research on Gender Equity was initiated at a meeting of potential researchers from the University of London, Commonwealth Secretariat, and Universities from Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa and Sri Lanka. Each researcher presented a country paper briefing the colleagues about the situation and issues with regard to Gender Equity in Higher Education in their own country. The meeting in Johannesburg was sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Johannesburg meeting was followed by the drafting of the research proposal by the research group in London, and scrutiny and observations by the fellow researchers. The finalized research proposal submitted to funding organizations was successful on obtaining support for Sri Lanka and Nigeria from the Department of International Development (DIFD), UK and for South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Sponsorship from the donor agencies provided essential support to purchase equipment, new software for qualitative data analysis, research capacity building, participation in international meetings and conduct of the study. Between the initial meeting and the acceptance of the proposal for funding, two of the countries, Kenya and Malaysia could not continue and were replaced by Tanzania and Uganda.

#### **Collaboration among Commonwealth Countries**

The Universities participating in the project were University of London (with Professor Louise Morley as the Coordinator of the Project and two other colleagues and a Research officer to support her), the University of Ibadan, the University of Cape Town, the University of Colombo, University of Dar es Salaam and the Makerere University.

The Lead Researchers were given guidelines regarding the selection of research assistants, obtaining approval from university management for data collection, appointment of Steering Committees and the activities to be completed at different phases of the research study. The Project Coordinator visited these universities for in-person assessment of the research planning and progress at different intervals and could meet with the Steering Committees and research teams.

#### **Development of Instruments**

The data collection instruments using the case study approach had to be standardized for the five participating countries. Through the use of electronic mail and discussions at meetings in member countries it was possible to examine the different scenarios in higher education and gender that exist in each country and understand the cultural contexts in which these scenarios evolved and persisted. A major benefit that accrued was the opportunity to obtain inputs from the research teams in the participating countries to standardize these instruments.

#### **Procurement of Equipment and Resources**

The Project enabled the research team obtain essential equipment such as a computer, tape recorders, Nvivo software and books on gender and higher education which facilitated the study, even though the financial commitment was moderate.

#### **Research Capacity Building**

In Sri Lanka the research team comprised three senior researchers who had experience mostly using large-scale surveys and two juniors. Two workshops were conducted on gender research and using interviews and observations for data collection. The

participation in these staff development workshops on research methodology was not limited to the research team but was extended to other staff from the two universities that were involved in the study.

The Project Team in the University of London provided training on the use of Nvivo for qualitative data analysis, and together with the teams from participating countries provided useful comments on the Working Papers produced by the Sri Lankan team and helped to improve the quality of the reports. The teams, similarly, contributed to the improvement of the quality of the Final Project Report, through their feedback on the Draft Report.

All the members of the research teams contributed to the dissemination activities and publications which enabled the junior researchers to develop their skills in presentation, gain confidence in participation in international seminars and conferences. Thus the Sri Lankan team produced a book based on the research study, "Not Adding Up: Looking Beyond Numbers", contributed an article (forthcoming in the Women's Studies International Forum) and presented at two national and four international conferences (New Zealand; Korea; Sri Lanka; Adelaide).

#### Follow-up Action on Gender Equity

Recognizing the importance of linking research with policy and action, two dissemination seminars and two workshops were held. The first dissemination seminar was held as an interim seminar in October 2003 six months after the commencement of the Project after the first Working Paper was written. The second in which the Lead Researchers or their nominees from the partner countries participated was also held in Sri Lanka enabling the academics, policy makers and researchers to meet and discuss the findings of the Project related to individual countries. The academics included those from both the Open University (where the Lead Researcher and another team member worked) and the University of Colombo (the research site).

The Research Team realized that in order to carry forward the research into action, it was necessary to conscientize key persons in the university system regarding the need for curriculum reform. The Directors of Staff Development Units in the Sri Lankan universities or their nominees were invited to participate in two sequential workshops on incorporation of gender into the curriculum. The participants identified areas in their respective curricula for which gender could be introduced and drew up plans for the same.

#### Partnership and Collaboration within Sri Lanka

Cooperation of stakeholders from the University chosen as the research site was essential for a study of this nature that entailed access to documents, lengthy interviews and observation of classes and meetings. The readiness to extend cooperation shown by all stakeholders such as the Chairman of the University Grants Commission, the Vice Chancellor, members of the Council, the Senate, Deans, staff, administrative staff and students who volunteered to be interviewed in response to a notice was truly encouraging.

Collaboration from academics and other stakeholders within the country was extremely helpful in improving the quality of the research study at various stages. Thus representatives of persons of eminence in the university system, women's organizations, Ministry of Women's Affairs served as members of the Steering Committee and provided direction and guidance to the study with their insightful observations. In the two workshops for training on research methodologies a senior academic from another universities in the country, University of Peradeniya also contributed as resource persons. The Lead Researcher's presentation on the findings of the study in respect of the

curriculum interventions was followed by presentation by academics from the University of Colombo on the issues they had confronted when they attempted to introduce gender courses into the mainstream curriculum and these served as the basis for the workshop activities.

### **Understanding among Communities and Nations**

The Research Study provided an opportunity for the Lead Researcher to visit other countries such as United Kingdom, South Africa and Tanzania for research meetings and participate in academic discussions and seminars on Gender Equity, enabling her to gain an understanding of the cultural contexts and issues impinging on gender equity in these countries and present an analysis of the Sri Lankan situation. Similarly Lead Researchers or members of the research teams from partner countries could visit Sri Lanka for the dissemination seminar held towards the end of the Project. Research teams' participation in Panel Sessions at international conferences in Korea, and Australia helped to continue, renew and enhance the friendships they had forged through the Project. The beneficial effect of these opportunities extended beyond academic dialogues to long-term friendships.

### **Networking and Forging Links in Research:**

#### **An Effective and Stimulating Medium of Global Cooperation**

In this paper an attempt was made to describe how partnership and collaboration among five developing countries and a developed country in the Commonwealth was utilized to conduct and complete a research study on Gender Equity in Higher Education. Access to resources made possible through forming a consortium of researchers across countries that succeeded in obtaining sponsorship facilitated the study that could not have materialized had each of the partner countries striven to carry out the study in isolation. Over and above the professional satisfaction of completing a high quality research study as academics, was the sense of gratification that the researchers experienced as a result of the research network that the Project had developed among the six Commonwealth countries.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this paper an attempt was made to describe how partnership and collaboration among five developing countries and a developed country in the Commonwealth was utilized to conduct and complete a research study on Gender Equity in Higher Education.

Access to resources made possible through forming a consortium of researchers across countries that succeeded in obtaining sponsorship facilitated the study that could not have materialized had each of the partner countries striven to carry out the study in isolation.

Over and above the professional satisfaction of completing a high quality research study as academics, was the sense of gratification that the researchers experienced as a result of the research network that the Project had developed among the six Commonwealth countries

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## **DOES OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING ALLOW FOR REACHING THE UNREACHED? Assessing Women Education In Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Women amongst other categories of people can be regarded as unreached group when the issue of access to education is considered world over. The culture in Nigeria as it is in many other African countries support the education of boys than that of girls. This has substantially reduced the number of women that are found in many aristocratic professions today without consideration for their ability and capability.

This paper considers the education of womenfolk in relation to the opportunity which the distance education mode avail the entire people of the universe wherever it is in operation with a view to confirm if the paradigm change brought about by the introduction of open and distance learning mode of education actually gives access to the education of the womenfolk in Nigeria

**Keywords:** Women, Distance education, Empowerment, Reached, Unreached, Access

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ker (1999) argued that women all over the world have been categorized under the disadvantaged groups of people and the society itself has systematically and consistently pursued the socialization of women into accepting the notion of being a disadvantaged group. Given the preponderance of this categorization of women as a disadvantaged group of people, a social reengineering process is required to introduce equality through emancipation of the mind. This is where education has been found to be useful as a liberating force and agent of social change especially in developing countries like Nigeria. It is on this premise that the Open and Distance Learning mode of education becomes imperative as an avenue for educating women within the functional framework of the general lifelong education process.

As big as Nigeria is, so also is the problem of access to education before the inception of Open and Distance Learning paradigm. If the number of those who want to acquire education in Nigeria is considered in relation to the number of available tertiary institutions and the number that is being offered admission although, noticeably from the time immemorial, the fact is that, access to education in general is a problem that is more prominent amongst the women folk.

Without mincing words however, it is obvious that the Nigerian traditional universities in totality cannot provide access to the number of applicants who intend to acquire university education in Nigeria. Furthermore, the fact still remains that the challenge of mass access to university education in Nigeria would continue to escalate by the day. This will continue to increase in progression as long as the higher education learning is tied only to admission into the four walls of the conventional universities be it government or privately owned. Currently, only 20 per cent of Nigerian secondary school leavers have access to places at universities in Nigeria, leaving many thousands without the chance to

continue their education in the country. ( Ipaye 2010) The Population Reference Bureau, as far back as 2007 showed that 34% of Nigeria's population put at about 140 million are aged 10 to 24. Of this figure, about 47million of the total number of secondary school leavers were expected to prepare for university admission between now and the next four to five years. Yet, for a period of one decade now, Nigerian universities had been able to take among themselves only between 24% (in 1998) falling to 5% in 2002 and rising to 8% in 2004 of all applicants for placement in Nigerian universities. As pointed out above, regarding the education of women, the number of women in all these admissions can be imagined.

According to UNESCO statistics, 31% of women in Nigeria are literate against 54% for men. According to Egunjobi 2005, the women make up to two thirds of illiterate adults, because it is believed that a woman's place is in the kitchen and they are also perceived as parts of their husbands' properties.

At the end of 1996, there were 36 Universities in Nigeria which are all owned by the Government both at the Federal and State levels, with the total enrolment of 236, 261. In response to strong social demand, the Federal Government of Nigeria has repeatedly taken steps to expand access to its higher education system. Among such policy actions are: increase in the numbers of federal and state Universities; approval of the establishment of private Universities; introduction of admission quota system to address regional and class imbalance and lastly, the establishment of a National Open University. Open and Distance Education (ODE) was introduced into Nigeria for the first time in 1984 by the Federal Government. This idea was suspended and was re-introduced in 2002 as a response to admission, economic crises and its social consequences. Noticeably, the impact of this change in people's lives, both in the urban and rural cities was quite enormous.

The newly introduced educational paradigm brought new kinds of education mode outside the conventional system in relation to everyday life for adults and young people alike who are on a job and cannot afford leaving their jobs for further educational advancement. Also, those who had earlier missed an opportunity ditto house wives and the women in purdah and also, those incarcerated by the outcomes of their offences and thereby kept in the prisons were provided with a second chance to acquire higher education.

Within the short period of existence, NOUN has distinguished itself in providing equal educational opportunities for all irrespective of sex, location, tribe or culture. NOUN has established study centres in almost all state capitals and in some local governments in addition to the special study centres established for special cases such as incarcerated people in prisons, military formation and riverine areas of Nigeria for the purpose of promoting mass higher education. With this effort, NOUN has contributed effectively to the attainment of education and also the empowerment of women through wider access to education Before NOUN, the efforts of Nigerian Government in education have not yielded significant positive results on girls and women education. This was aptly observed by Onuebunwa (2003), through the remark that Girl-child educational attainment in Nigeria is still low as records have shown that fewer girls go to school than boys. Ofoegbu and Ojogwu (2011) in their paper, reported that UNICEF (2003) stated that the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER, 2001) indicate that 71% of out of school children are girls, while Mohammed (2006) revealed that the literacy rate for males was 58% as against 41% for females.

Indeed, ODL has been a grace saving devise to salvage women's course as far as education is concerned. In Nigeria, girls and women comprise about 49.69 percent (SAPA 1993) of the total population. Incidentally, about 61percent of the total female



population are reported to be illiterates as against 37.7 percent illiterate male population. UNICEF (2002) have it that the National literacy rate for female is only 56% compared to 72% for male, and in certain states the female literacy, enrolment and achievement rates are much lower, for example, the net enrolment of girls in Sokoto state is about 15% compared to 59% for boys.

Although Uduigwomen (2004), observed that there is progress in women education with the exception of Northern Nigeria, the fact still remains that women are discriminated against in access to education for social and economic reasons. This has probably led to the greatest social harm of the twentieth century, where a whole group of females were denied access to education, on the basis of gender differences. There is palpably a deluge of problems besetting the Nigerian women, but all of them arise from illiteracy. This suggests therefore that a large part of the empowerment process is associated with education of the women themselves. The root of the problem is the degree of importance women themselves have attached to education. Many of them believe that the life of a successful woman revolves around her children, her husband and domestic chores.

This lack of personal ambition prevents her from thinking about pursuing other educational goals, which may have great influence on her life. In the case of the workingwomen in the cities, there had been a gradual predilection to abandon further training because of the demands of work and family as well as the huge costs associated with pursuing higher studies in conventional school system or universities. However, education is the only known bedrock of women empowerment, be it formal or informal education. Infact, Fafunwa (1971) viewed education as the aggregate of all the process in which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he or she lives.

In NOUN, as rightly observed by Alaezi (2006), the courses are organized for easy access, grasp, retention and retrieval. The programmes are made available to students at their chosen places (e.g. home, school or workplace) at affordable costs and are to be completed at the students' own time and pace. These are part of NOUN's efforts to move against the Issue of Access to education which has always been a problem because of inadequate funding and facilities to meet the admission demands.

#### **WOMEN EMPOWERED THROUGH ACCESS CREATED BY OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION**

There are many groups of women who have been denied access to formal education because of one reason or the other. These examples include women who because of obedience and adherence to Islamic religion practice of purdah or as full time housewives or for other reasons have been denied education.

These groups of women have immensely benefited from open and distance mode of educational system. An empirical example can be found in the number of women who have been empowered through completion of one programme or the other. Records from the Distance learning Institute of the University of Lagos, Nigeria indicates that of the major programmes offered by the institute as at 2001, 2874 students offering Administration Degrees were women while 164 of the women offered science Degrees. According to Baikie et al(2005) the National Teacher's Institute which trains teachers in order to improve the quality of the nation's teaching force, records that within it, the number of students enrolled for the National Certificate of Education were 93,000 out of which 68,000 were women;

For the Advanced Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma Programmes, the students enrolled were 8000. Of this number, 5000 were women; the Pivotal Teacher Training Programme

(PTTP) (which was last offered in 2003 had an enrolment of 29,000 and 21,200 were women (National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna 2000); and the Grade Two Teachers' Certificate (TCII) Programme designed for teachers who do not possess the TC II had an enrolment of 103,000 students and of which 77,250 were women. (National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna 2001) At the National Open University of Nigeria which is a single mode university, started her open and distance learning academic activities in 2004 and has records of women who have completed a post-graduate diploma programmes in various disciplines amounting to 2,341 while those who have completed master's degree programmes were numbered to be 4,182. These arrays of students were from different religious backgrounds including Islam, Christianity and other traditional religions. Amongst these graduated women, 5,034 of them were full time housewives.

The undergraduate learners are not considered since none of the students of the undergraduate programmes have graduated for now. Following these figures, it is obvious that women in spite of their conditions could access education and get empowered because the mode of education allows them to sit at home as housewives and study for a programme of their choice without jeopardizing their marriages and also enables them to contribute to the development of their various localities (Olakulehin and Ojo 2006). This statement is further confirmed by a study carried out by Onyishi (2004) at Nsukka, the South eastern Nigeria that non-formal distance education is a woman empowerment strategy in Nigeria.

#### **INSTANCES OF PROGRAMME OF STUDY THAT HAVE HELPED WOMEN TO GET EMPOWERED THROUGH ODL ACCESS**

As in other countries of Africa, many programmes have been put together at one time or the other in order to assist women to get empowered. In Nigeria, women education programme was first launched in 1986 (Ohiri-Aniche, 2000). After that, lots of other programmes have come onboard.

There was the Mass Literacy programme, Family Support Programme, Better Life for Rural Women and many other developmental programmes developed by Non-Governmental Organisations. Through these programmes, training was provided for women in different areas such as skills' development in different trades such as soap making, garri (Cassava flakes) processing, pomade making, oral dehydration therapy (ORT), fashion designing, hairdressing and numerous lifelong skills that are put together in order to make women to be more self-reliant and at the same time promote their sense of self-worth. It is certainly a means of fulfilling the life dreams of many women who have been saddled with the function of being full time housewives. Azikiwe (1992) remarked that the issue of women education is essential for rural development and women were not well equipped to contribute their useful quota to the society as a result of illiteracy.

In the academic sphere, teacher education programme which unarguably is the first field that witness extensive use of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Nigeria was promoted by The National Teachers' Institute (NTI) Kaduna in 1976 by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

This aimed at producing qualified teachers that would meet the needs of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) which then was established basically to take care of the primary education of the young ones.

The enrolment statistics for the programmes of the NTI reveals that women have benefited tremendously from the ODL system in the area of teacher training at both Grade II (for those that teaches in primary schools) and National Certificate of Education (NCE)[for those that teaches in secondary schools] levels

## **OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) AND THE NIGERIAN WOMEN**

The Nigeria Government has taken ODL as an instrument that will achieve its educational goals following the statement in the Country's National Policy in Education (2004) which states that the goal of ODL shall be to provide access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities for those who otherwise would have been denied. This policy has been instrumental in reducing illiteracy rate, drop out rate, and furthermore creating accessibility and immense opportunities for the Nigerian woman. Many Nigerian women from all walks of life have continued to seize the opportunities of ODL programmes in order to improve on their education, get better jobs, and improve on their standards of living. Today, ODL has brought succour to women education and subsequently, empowerment.

The social realities in contemporary times have shown that the limitation in the access of many women to Education opportunities which would have enhanced their empowerment is due chiefly to the inability of the learner and the instructor to be in face-to-face contact. The concept of open and distance education is a scheme that affords a nation the opportunity to effectively transmit educational benefits to all its citizens cheaply and more effectively, especially those hitherto unreached or denied access on the basis of one social consideration or the other. Nigeria women undoubtedly fall within this category and this system of education affords them the opportunity to pursue the gift of knowledge without contradicting any societal dictates. The uniqueness of distance education as a creation of access for women education strategy can be gleaned from the fact that it straddles so many facets of the social system.

Another group of women are the itinerant nomadic women who can immensely benefit from this radical ODL approach to instructional processes. The social dictates and the vocational practices of women in these nomadic societies require that they be always constantly on the move with their families. Their subsistence lifestyle is based solely on this means of living and educational pursuit is secondary, if at all it exists. For generations, women in these societies have been denied access to quality education of whatever form due to the peripatetic nature of their livelihood. Women in this category through NOUN benefits from the open and distance learning model as they are properly sensitised about the advantages that education holds for them and their families.

Therefore, introducing the ODL scheme, which does not take them out of their social environments, yet seeks to deliver qualitative education about their social environment and other societies seriously, reinforces this.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the final analysis, there seems to be no end to the palpable advantages of the distance learning system in relation to women accessing education. While the focus of this work is primarily on the women, the distance learning system holds great advantages for the entire society.

Almost anyone can benefit from this unique system of education and at limited costs. The system however holds special implication for the women, especially in a developing society such as Nigeria.

Lots of market women, traders, and itinerant businesswomen, women in *Purdah*, working women as well as women and girls resident in the sub-rural societies could benefit from this scheme.

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## THE NEW ALTERNATIVE WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: e-Learning and Virtual Universities

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### ABSTRACT

Having in mind that due to fast changes in techniques and technology especially in the last decade of 20th century, new kinds of business and jobs emerged, the need for new knowledge became very clear. Accordingly, everywhere in the world the existing education system is being redefined, and educational programs that have to closely relate to practice are being improved. For that sake, "new schools for entrepreneurs and managers" are founded, which are based on modern programs and courses meant for various groups of businesspeople. Very popular are virtual faculties, which are founded all around the world and enable connection between businesspeople and business learners with lecturers from all around the world, no matter where they actually might reside. Participating in courses and testing via the Internet, essentially change previous way of gaining knowledge in classical classrooms.

This way of learning contributes to fast information exchange, more access to the newest knowledge and experiences in this domain and save the time and money. Thus, in this millennium the classic way of education will be slowly substituted with some other forms of education, in which learning from homes and offices with the help of computers, were true. Interactive education should provide a completely new dimension of gaining knowledge making learning faster and easier for those who attend certain courses. In this article the authors aimed to explain advantages and disadvantages of e-learning with a stress of special benefits for women. Additionally, presented are results of several researches relevant to the topic.

**Keywords:** e-learning, women, female learners, virtual faculty, education, knowledge, entrepreneurship, motivation, Serbia.

### INTRODUCTION

It is well known that a correlation exists between entrepreneurship and economic performance. But entrepreneurship brings more than this correlation to our societies, because the science is also a vehicle for personal development. In spite of importance of entrepreneurship for personal and social development, all potentials are not fully being exploited particularly in the European Union (EU). The EU has failed to encourage an abundance people to become entrepreneurs. According to the *Eurobarometar*, although 47% of Europeans prefer self-employment, only 17% actually realise their ambitions (European Commission [EC], 2007). Regarding new entrepreneurial initiative, only 4% of

Europeans state to be engaged in creating a business, and 29% of Europe's SME declared growth as their main ambition (EC).

Europe, unlike the United States, suffers from low expansion rates after start-up. Europe's untapped potential appears to derive from a complex set of mutually interacting framework conditions, attitudes, and skills. In this paper, however, priority will be given to virtual learning as a means to enhance entrepreneurship among women. In that context, entrepreneur's skills will be defined, which should fulfil present and the future needs of our societies. This dilemma leads to the following central research questions:

- How do we gain skills, which will meet new requirements of societies?
- Is high quality traditional entrepreneurship education the most effective choice for obtaining new skills for entrepreneurs or necessary to foster alternative ways of education?
- Which factors should become educational components to emphasize when devising an academic entrepreneurship program: perceptions, financial factors, productivity factors, product development, self-awareness, or self-motivation? Why?
- If entrepreneurship is taught in an online learning environment,
- what evaluation tools or measures should academia use to determine or identify success factors or traits to becoming an entrepreneur?

The core of this paper is to address, *inter alia*, the above set of questions while particular emphasis will be given to the question of how women may acquire entrepreneurial education while not balancing both their jobs at work and at home.

### **Definition of Entrepreneurial Education**

"Entrepreneurship development concerns the development of people's potential as a country's most valuable resource" (Kroon, De Klerk, Dippenaar, 2003, pp. 319-322). The process is an innovative and dynamic technique, which is also an important segment of economic growth. Entrepreneur is a catalytic agent of change, which generates employment opportunities for others. Therefore, paying attention to improving skills of entrepreneurs and their education is necessary to increase competencies. Considering the importance of education for entrepreneurs, recently it becomes evident that entrepreneurship is one of the fastest growing science in today's undergraduate curricula in the United States and worldwide (Radović Marković, 2007a).

The 1990s saw the growth of entrepreneurship as a profession within business, and in that professional approach lies the secret benefit of entrepreneurship education--it helps decrease the chances of failure by stressing a consistent and proven set of practices. That idea of professionalizing the process of entrepreneurship is the other great commonality across all of modern entrepreneurship education. ("Entrepreneurial Education," 2009, para. 2) In the past 3 decades, formal programs (majors, minors, and certificates) in entrepreneurship have more than quadrupled, from 104 in 1975 to more than 500 in 2006 ("Entrepreneurship in American"). The development of courses in entrepreneurship has been exponential. Leaders in the field of entrepreneurship education recognized that there are many, many definitions of how entrepreneurship could and should be taught and much of performance depends on the level of education involved.

While many definitions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs exist, the following definition by Jeffrey Timmons (n.d.) of Babson College is consistent with our belief that entrepreneurship involves more than just "starting businesses." "*Entrepreneurship is the ability to create and build something from practically nothing*" (Timmons, Section 1). The science of entrepreneurship involve initiating, doing, achieving, and building an enterprise or organization, rather than just watching, analyzing or describing an entity. Entrepreneurship is the knack for sensing an opportunity where others see chaos,

contradiction, and confusion. Though Entrepreneurship, the ability to build a “founding team” that complements self-efficiencies and talents becomes enhanced. It is the know-how to find, marshal, and control resources (often owned by others) and to ensure that funding is available when needed. Finally, entrepreneurship is the willingness to take calculated risks, both personal and financial, by performing at maximum capacity to get the odds in your favour (“Criteria for Youth,” n.d.).

## **MULTIFACETED CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

Proponents of educational technology for years have stated that faculties need to focus more on teaching “21st-century skills,” such as problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration. The 21st century learners will need to meet the complex demands of the new economy and society in a globalized form (Radović Marković, 2006-2007). The workplace of tomorrow will increasingly require 21st century learners to work in teams, collaborating across companies, communities, and continents. Certain skills cannot be developed solely by simple multiplechoice exams. New education programmes for entrepreneurs must be based on exchanging good practice through studies and networks among strategic partners (researchers, entrepreneurs, financiers, advisors, policy-makers, and so forth).

To address individual needs of learners, attention must be paid to adaptability of the curriculum and the learning environment. A worthy institution views quality issues as primary and integral throughout the conceptual design of its education programs. True quality institutions, must govern their curriculum, instruction, and support services by policies and standards established to assure future success of the participants (Capogrossi, 2002).

In many occasions, the assessment and examination vehicles have been evaluative measures of knowledge and competencies of learners measured against learning objectives derived from the needs of the industry and professions. Successful institutions must design their learning objectives to serve the demonstrated needs of the desired student audience.

The academic and professional needs of the student audience will be at the foundation of the curriculum, and the subject matter objectives will become the focus of quality control process (Capogrossi, 2007).

## **GENDER AND DISTANCE LEARNING**

The changes in women’s educational and career attainment may have multifaceted characteristics. Women might have increased their enrolment in colleges compared to men, but women may still differ in terms of the types of subjects in which they are enrolled. A study conducted by the World Bank has recently shown that if women in the field of agriculture had the same education as men did, the agricultural yield in developing countries would increase by 6 to 22% (Radović Marković, 2007b). This example, as well as other similar ones, gives every rightful reason to focus greater attention to further development of educational programs aimed at women, but also to enhancing contemporary technologies that will improve e-learning.

Distance learning is becoming increasingly attractive for women, as shown by some research studies. Namely, more than 60% of those over 25 years of age and female opt for this type of development and education in the world (Radović Marković, 2006a). The reason for this lies in the fact that this method of learning offers numerous advantages. Among the most prominent benefits, the following may be pointed out:



- **The flexibility of the learning process (learners study at the time most convenient to them).**
- **Achieving a better balance between personal and other commitments (they may spend more time at home with their families).**
- **Minimizing costs (both time and money savings are made).**
- **A deeper sense of self-fulfilment (acquiring relevant and useful**
- **knowledge and achieving professional goals).**

Furthermore, women at a certain age, over the age typical for learners (18-22 years of age), consider virtual classrooms to minimize the embarrassment and alienation factor (Capogrossi, 2002). In addition to these advantages provided to women by online studying, distance learning also enables women to choose a certified course, offered by more than 90% of faculties in the world (Radović Marković, 2007b).

Accordingly, women are given the opportunity of choosing some of the programs from a broader range, the ones that best suit their professional interests and goals, without the requirement to move geographically. In other words, women are no longer limited to the local educational institutions, but have at their disposal a more comprehensive choice of educational programs offered worldwide. Studying over the Internet enables women permanent development thus reducing the educational gap in comparison to men. At the same time, the social status and life quality of women are being improved. Higher qualifications enable women to contribute more to their community.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF ONLINE LEARNING FOR WOMEN**

The Internet has extended many new opportunities to businesspeople both men and women. One such opportunity is the ability to complete programs online. Most universities, polytechnics, and other training providers are presently using study-away approach capitalizing on the online potentials of the Internet programs delivery as and when services are warranted. More and more, learners completing a traditional degree and people who want to expand their skill sets are reverting to online programs. The selection is partly due to convenience and effectiveness and partly because the programs as a whole are affordable. As with in any other program, a certificate is earned upon the successful completion of the program as well as an official transcript of academic record.

Online programs range from 1-hour courses on self-development to an entire doctoral degree program. The American Business Women Association (ABWA) in 2001, in accordance with its mission to help educate and train its members, views online classes and course-work as an effective option for women who desire to continue developing their business skills, and hence the association embarks on creation of more partnerships with quality companies that involve in online programs delivery. For instance, the association formed partnership with QuicKnowledge.com, which is offers discounts on all its courses to ABWA members. The association also consider all hours completed through online courses as part of its Continuing Education Credit program (ABWA).

However, the most significant contribution of online programs particularly to women is having the opportunity to self-pace within a desired time frame. Through the online programs, learners can complete projects whether at work, home, or selected locations. On many occasions, a busy executive may not be able to leave the office, and yet, assignments, term papers and even research projects have to be finalized somehow; the magic of getting the assignments complete may be made possible through the online mode. Where programs are completely in online mode, all class lectures, assignments, tests and instructions are delivered through the Internet. Some programs have voice and/or video assisted delivery, and may also include PowerPoint and iPod presentations.

That is the main reason that Internet service provider, a browser, and a computer with plenty of random access memory (RAM) are needed prior to an online course commencing to receive lectures from anywhere and any time. According to Barbara Sleeper, on different occasions, learners do travel from one location to the other in the course of their programs; this may be some weeks or even months at a time so that learners create networks while continuing their studies (ABWA, 2001). Sleeper was an ABWA national member who served as 1987-1988 National Secretary, 1986-1987 District II Vice President, and was named one of the 1989-1990 Top Ten Business Women of ABWA. Sleeper is the Director of the MBA program at Dallas Baptist University, and has developed an online marketing course in consumer behaviour in support of his opinion and ideology (ABWA). Sleeper opined that for graduate programs, universities should transfer credits to and from one another on reciprocal credit recognition basis without experiencing resistance (ABWA). Hence, graduate learners should have the option to continue their education and not lose the hours of completed courses when transferring into another educational institution.

### Methodologies and Findings

Serbia does not have extensive experience deploying online studies and virtual faculties. Forming an international learning network of women may enhance entrepreneurship opportunities in Serbia as well as in countries that are developing or in transition (Radović Marković, 2006b).

Because the functionality of the technologies and the benefits of virtual learning to learners and professors have been misunderstood, the entrepreneurial process although improved in Serbia has been impacted due to the lack of awareness (Radović Marković, 2006b).

If Serbians or citizens of other nations become more familiar with the techniques, potential learners as well as educators may be able to effectively discern the pros and cons of how e-learning enhancing entrepreneurialship.

In a 2005-2006 mini-study conducted by Brigette's Technology Consulting and Research Firm, 4 female managers responded to how human progress is driven and measured. However, 2 female managers indicated that human progress could not be measured. Factors indicated as drivers and measurers of human progress included perceptions and acceptances of others, financial and productivity factors, and development of new products, which can be applied to technical and educational programs. A nurse manager reported, "Human progress is driven by selfawareness and self-motivation. To measure human progress is a subjective observation, not a reliable tool available yet." Incorporating the factors into online educational curriculum may assist female learners with preparation to becoming successful entrepreneurs.

Professor Marković conducted a study in 2009 that aimed to measure the role of online learning and how much the process has been accepted among learners and entrepreneurs in Serbia. Marković interviewed and asked 54 participants (34 women and 20 men) between the ages of 18 and 30 the following associated subquestions:

- What do you think about online learning?
- What do you think about virtual professors?
- What is the interaction between students, students and professors?
- Does new technology isolate students from teachers?
- Do you prefer online learning than face-to-face? Why yes or why not?
- Does gender matter in online learning for entrepreneurs?
- What are online learning outcomes vs. Face-to-Face?

Although the majority of participants (68%), think that online learning is great as a new alternative for learning, the great amount of participants (63%) are not familiar with online courses for entrepreneurs and are unsure how virtual faculties function. Although it is fair to state that virtual learning will not obviously inspire every learner, it is fair to state that since a lack of knowledge exists concerning the process, most learner will consider the alternative as means to achieve knowledge in most subject areas thereby stimulating human progress. Thirty percent of participants stated that lots of reasons exist for taking online courses. Low cost was a primary reason. Several participants (45%) proposed that women and elderly learners are more motivated to enroll in some online course because they are better at communicating online and scheduling their learning. Seventy percent of opined, "anytime, anyplace" nature of online learning suits female students more than male, whereby women are fitting their education in among their regular work. It is fair to conclude that women more so than men utilize management skills to complete their studies, driving human progress.

Although 50% of the participants do not desire to have discussions with other learners and professors who cannot be seen, most participants (95%) stated that computer literacy is the most significant for online studying. Although women choose some computing courses when offered in combination with other disciplines that emphasize social issues and computer applications, women think that online studying and virtual faculties are not so much popular in Serbia because of the lack of computer literacy, specially among women. It is fair to state that if women in Serbia as well as other nations are readily to enroll in virtual courses due to the low costs, women may not

- readily participant in discussions due to computer literacy or
- be open during discussions due to resistance, thereby, limiting human progress.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Open communication and management approaches will become the driving techniques to enhance learning skills in virtual environments, which will meet new requirements of societies. High quality traditional entrepreneurship education can be used as a means to obtain new skills for entrepreneurs or necessary to foster alternative ways of education for women in Serbia as well as other nations that does not support virtual learning. Self-motivation, as a means for women to acquire computer skills, seems to be the major educational components to emphasize when devising an academic entrepreneurship program. The percentage of female virtual learners who are motivated to become entrepreneurs and have taking actions to becoming an entrepreneur should be used as evaluation tools or measures to determine or identify success factors of educational programs, particular in the study of entrepreneurship. Further research may explore how and when online instruction is most effective for female learners who are entrepreneurs. For instance, additional investigation should describe motivational factors of female entrepreneurs learners in taking elective and required courses in traditional, online, and blended approaches that are team oriented, which minimize being alienated. Future research might also determine the effects of mandating computing courses in educational program as a prerequisite to other virtual courses, which may minimize embarrassment.

## SUMMARY

This paper dealt principally with merits of virtual learning particularly in regards to women after a brief discussion on the correlation between entrepreneurship and economic performance.

The authors opined that entrepreneurship brings more than this correlation to 21st century societies, because the science is also a vehicle for personal development and human progress. In spite of importance of entrepreneurship for personal and social development, the authors agreed that all potentials are not fully being exploited particularly in the EU and other developing nations. With 30% of Europeans desiring to become entrepreneurs and not realizing their ambitions (EC, 2007), virtual learning is becoming a more popular topic as a means to stimulate awareness and motivation.

The paper went further to reveal that Europe, unlike the United States, suffers from low expansion rates after start-up. Europe's untapped potential appears to derive from a complex set of mutually interacting framework conditions, behaviours, and skills. Giving priority to entrepreneurial skills among women provided insight on the techniques that are possibly needed to motivate women to master virtual learning and achieve entrepreneurial success. In that context, entrepreneurial skill was defined as those skills that should fulfil present and the future needs of the societies.

As part of two studies, the authors considered some pertinent questions including how to gain skills, which aimed to understand techniques that can be used to meet new requirements of societies and measure human progress. It was this question of "how" that formed the core of this paper.

The authors concluded that computer assisted learning (e-learning) through the Internet was the most significant mode of entrepreneurial education particularly for women in managerial positions who tend to be very busy like their men counterparts. In some European countries, such as Serbia, e-learning has evolved; therefore, the process is very difficult to consider its cons and pros in this country.

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## OPENING DOORS TO THE 'LESS PRIVILEGED' The Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) Experience

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### ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the results of a survey study that investigated the profile of typical Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) learner and contribution made by MCA in the provision of access to tertiary education by marginalised groups. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used and data was collected through a questionnaire and interview schedule from 102 randomly selected MCA distance learners and one female interviewee. The respondents were drawn from 6 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Descriptive data analysis was mainly used, including frequency distribution tables, graphs and figures.

The results of this study indicate that there are more female enrollees than males at MCA, since three out of every four MCA learners are females. A significant number of MCA learners are mature working adults and a majority of these learners are from less privileged income groups. The survey also shows that women generally consider ODL to be compatible with motherhood and job constraints, while most respondents view MCA programmes as affording them a second chance. In addition, many of the respondents find the cost of MCA programmes affordable.

### INTRODUCTION

Triggered by an initial curiosity about the differential profile of Mauritius College of the Air's (MCA) open and distance learning (ODL) learners, this paper explores MCA's contribution to making higher education accessible to adults in need of an alternative mode of learning. Since its establishment in 1971, democratising access to education through mass media has been the *raison d'être* of the Mauritius College of the Air. Over the years, ODL, as the 'golden goose' of the developing world (Perraton, 2000) has laid flexible methodologies for higher learning, 'hatching' benefits for adults seeking to learn differently at their convenience. The continuing appeal of MCA ODL methodology lies in its self-learning materials, which enable self-paced learning anywhere anytime.

The study reported in this article was based on two key research questions:

- who is the typical MCA learner?
- what makes the ODL mode germane to this type of learner?

One hundred and two (102) students across 6 disciplines were surveyed and a telephone interview was carried out for further probing with one of these respondents. Significant patterns in learner demographics have emerged. Findings provide insight into the power of ODL to fight knowledge imperialism, create opportunity and bring about social justice.

### CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

ODL refers to practices that enable access to learning with no or minimum barriers with respect to age, gender or time constraints. Learning is delivered through print, audio-

visual, and ICT-mediated self-learning reference materials to those separated by time and space from those who are teaching. Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) programmes are delivered mostly through print materials supported by weekly/ fortnightly tutoring at learner-friendly times. The new generation of MCA programmes is offered through state of the art teleconferencing.

Open and distance learning (ODL), the so-called 'golden goose of the developing world' (Perraton, 2000), has presented MCA with a practical strategy to address the challenge of widening access at a lesser cost through economies of scale. It is a sustainable, flexible, convenient and cost-effective model capable of reaching working adults at their doorsteps.

The term 'less privileged' refers to individuals who have few or no opportunities to access higher education due to several challenges, including;

- multiple socio-economic commitments,
- mature age,
- limited financial means, and
- inadequate academic qualifications

Such non-traditional learners are unable to access conventional institutions and are threatened by 'knowledge imperialism' in an increasingly knowledge-driven world (ICDE, 2009). Such learners would be deprived of their right to higher education as stated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This paper argues that the Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) opens the doors to tertiary education for such 'marginalised' individuals.

## **MAURITIUS COLLEGE OF THE AIR**

Mauritius College of the Air (MCA), a parastatal non-profit institution, has a four-decade long history of democratising education. The MCA was set up, with help from the International Extension College in 1971, to promote education in the newly independent Mauritius through mass media and 'correspondence courses' (Dhurbarrylall, 1991). Back in 1972, in his inaugural speech, the first Prime Minister of Mauritius spoke of the MCA's role to 'equalise educational facilities' (Dodds, 1975). MCA attained the status of tertiary institution in 1998. Although distance learning activities were already in place as far back as 1998, the division of distance education was only set up in 1994, with the assistance of the Open University of UK.

## **GLOBALISATION**

Globalisation has increased the internationalisation of higher learning and provided the Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) with the capacity to widen access to higher education at a lesser cost. Through gradual participation in various forms of international collaborations, MCA has benefitted in several ways, including circumvent high costs of course development, reduce course fees, develop its staff, and increase the diversity of professional, undergraduate, and postgraduate programmes that cater for diverse market needs. These transnational initiatives comprise:

- Course development (with UNISA),
- Consultancy (Open University, UK),
- Staff training for capacity building (e.g. Tele Universite de Quebec, University of London),
- Licensing of course materials (NEC, IGNOU),
- Funding of projects (IEC, UNICEF, World Bank), and



➤ **Import of programmes.**

Globalisation has also enabled home-based access to prestigious overseas universities and the import of reasonably-priced courses with self-learning materials from internationally acclaimed institutions. These partnerships have widened MCA's panoply of undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional programmes, thereby enabling MCA to cater for the needs of more individuals employed in education, business and commerce, medical, and transport domains. The current MCA paradigm is to explore innovative ways of collaboration epitomised by interactive tele-learning programmes that are broadcast in real-time by overseas partner institutions. MCA is now venturing into another dimension of opening the doors of higher learning and bringing it closer to the 'less privileged'.

Although funding and staff training provisions are diminishing at MCA, due to global financial crisis, programme provision continues to grow in breadth and scope through involvement in international partnerships. Table 1 below shows the growth in the number and range of partnerships, from three in 2000 to seven by 2010, while the number of programmes has correspondingly increased from 8 to 25 over the same period.

Table1.

International Partnerships and programmes over the past decades

Year 2000		Year 2010	
International Partners	Programmes	International Partners	Programmes
Institute of Transport (UK)	Diploma Advanced Diploma	Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (UK)	Professional Diploma Advanced Diploma
Chartered Institute of Marketing (UK)	CIM	IGNOU	Diploma in Youth in Development Work Diploma in HIV & Family Education
IGNOU _DIM			BCom BA English BCA MA English PGD-HRM PGD-Distance Education MA Distance Education MCom MBA
University of Madras			Bachelor in Business Administration
Amity University			MBA International Business Master in Finance and Control Bachelor of Finance & I Analysis

### PAN-AFRICAN E-NETWORK

The Pan-African e-network is a fine illustration of international networking in higher education to reduce the "tertiary divide". Initiated by former Indian president Abdul Kalam in 2009, it has provided the technological capacity to wire MCA and more than 12 other educational institutions across Africa for synchronous interactions, such as teleconferenced lectures from the University of Madras, IGNOU and Amity.

The availability of archived lectures on the provider institutions websites makes this mode of delivery flexible and convenient for working adults.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Who is the typical MCA learner?
- Why does ODL appeal to this learner?

Random perceptions have hitherto informed our views given the dearth of relevant statistical information on the MCA student population. This survey attempts to explore patterns in learner profiles.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data. Collection instruments consisted of a questionnaire survey and telephone interview. Undertaken in January 2011, the survey aimed at gathering demographic and socio-economic details such as age, gender, marital status, income, and reasons for opting for ODL among others. Learners following 6 programmes were distributed questionnaires when they attended their Saturday tutorials at our learning centre in Belle Rose SSS. All present filled in the questionnaire. The following programmes ranging from diploma to master's level were selected on the basis of representativeness in terms of academic level and discipline:

- Diploma in Library and Information Science
- BA English
- BSc Management
- Postgraduate Diploma in Human Resource Management
- Master's in Business Administration
- MA English.

Data gathered during the survey inspired us to probe deeper into certain trails. A telephone interview was carried out with one female respondent from the 102 previously surveyed. She was selected on account of:

- gender
- mature age
- lack of conventional formal qualifications, and
- limited financial means.

A structured approach that was preferred covered several key prompts, including

- access problems
- learning motivations and
- appropriateness of ODL.

She will be referred to as Aastha for confidentiality reasons.

## FINDINGS

Findings point at 5 interesting elements in the profile of those surveyed:

- Gender-wise, the composition of the research sample shows that Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) attracts more females (73.5%) than males

- The distribution by age suggests that there are slightly more mature learners (51%) who are aged above 35 years
- A typical MCA learner is employed, since 98 (96%) of the 102 respondents reported that they were working
- A majority (67.6%) of learners earn a salary of less than Rs20 000 per month
- Most learners have high entry qualifications, except for 10% that does not have A-levels.

Our findings indicate that ODL has played a key role in opening access to higher education and empowering women, mature learners, the economically-disadvantaged and the 'qualifications-challenged'. Following analysis of each of these profile elements, the case of Aastha, who embodies all these, will be discussed.

### Empowering Women

Women learners considerably outnumbered their male counterparts; nearly three-quarters (73.5%) of the sample comprised female learners. The chart below shows the number of male and female learners tally out of 102.

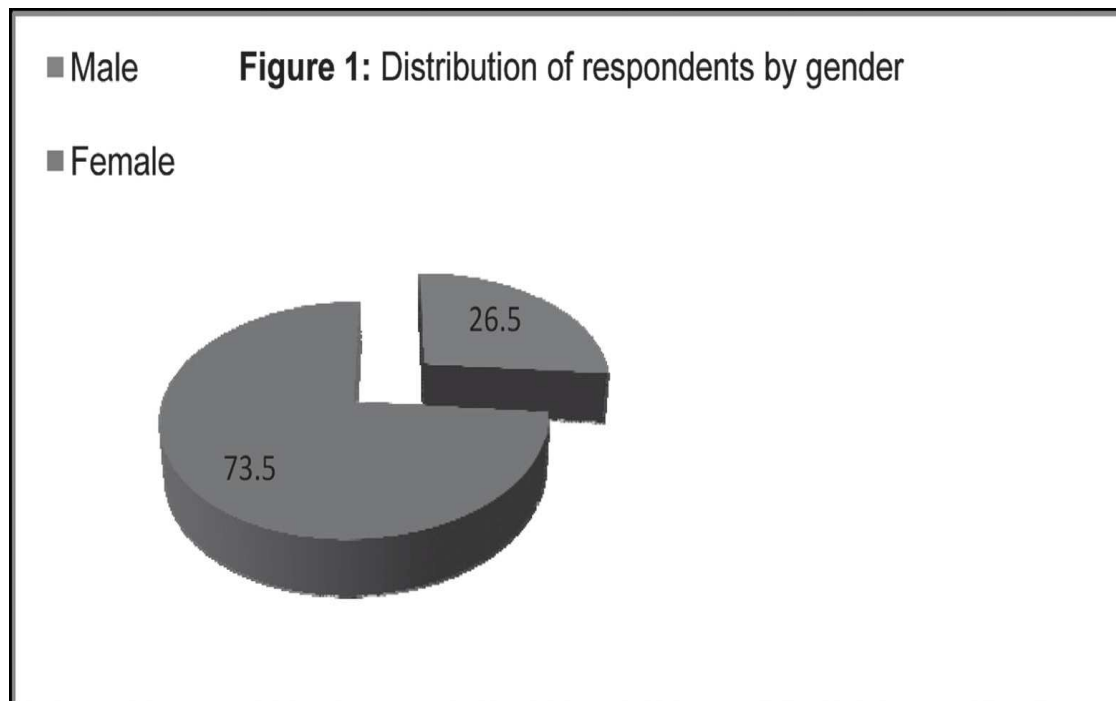


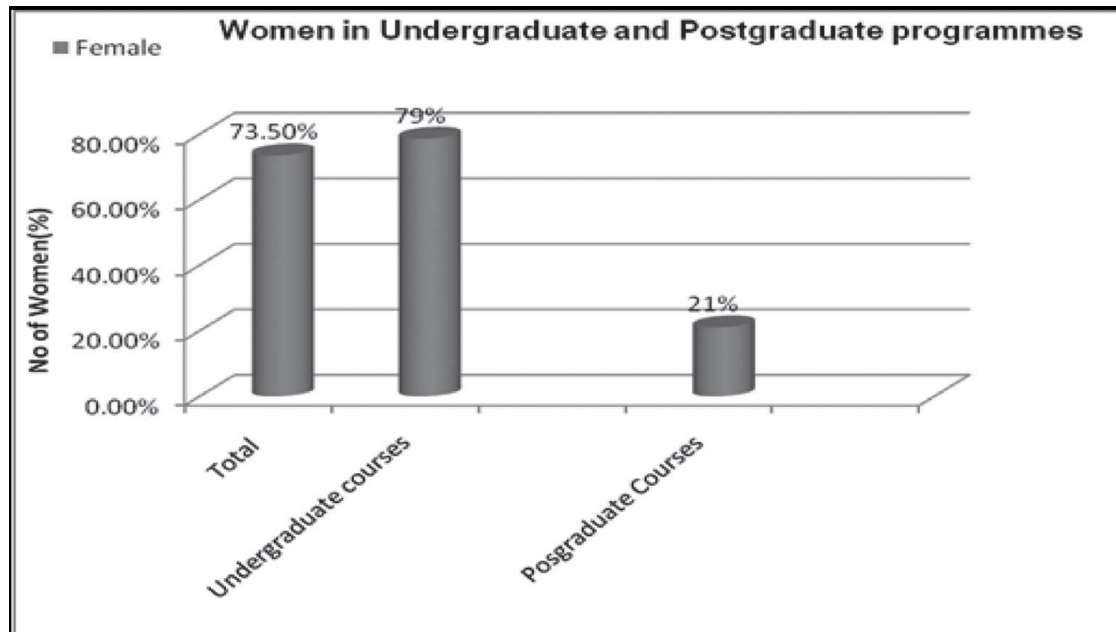
Figure 1.  
Distribution of respondents by gender

Interestingly, 86.8% of them said they opted for ODL on account of its flexibility. 68% of these women are married and out of these 88% have children. Moreover, in the open-ended section of the questionnaire some stated how the ODL mode provided space for learning whilst juggling multiple household, childcare and professional commitments.

It provides 'flexible time management possibilities while preventing classroom attendance'. This is in line with worldwide studies on the potential of ODL to widen access to higher learning for women.

Qureshi (2002, cited in Kwapong 2007) postulates that this mode of learning 'attracts more married women than on campus forms' and rightly argues that ODL helps women circumvent 'constraints of time, space, resources and socio-economic disabilities.'

A comparison of female enrolment rate at undergraduate level with that at postgraduate level reveals that there were nearly four times as many women in enrolled on Undergraduate (79%) than postgraduate programmes (21%). This is illustrated in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2.**  
Female learners in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes

The greater participation of women in undergraduate studies appears to be a global trend, as attested by Pryzmus (2004, cited in Kwapong 2007), who asserts that women are more likely than men to interrupt formal studies for parenthood. As a result many women are easily constrained by their diverse parental, household, and work obligations that ODL is their 'first chance' to university education (Reuss, 1994, cited in Kwapong 2007). It is speculated that after undergraduate studies they take another break to attend to their multiple duties. There is a need for further research in this area.

### **Empowering Mature Learners**

More than half (51%) of those surveyed are aged over 35, 10% are above 50, while 96% of the sample comprises working learners. ODL literature abounds on the appropriateness of this mode for adult learners (Knowles 1990 cited in Kwapong, 2007). This is also confirmed by the current study which shows that 68.6% of the learners said they opted for ODL due to its flexibility. ODL self-learning materials enable busy adults to study at their convenience and pace. Moreover, tutorial timings at Mauritius College of the Air (MCA), which take place on Saturdays and/or weekdays and after normal working hours, make learning 'permissible' in the 'time-deprived' hectic life of mature adults. ODL provides such individuals an environment conducive for learning using andragogical strategies that are appropriate for the learning style of adults (Knowles 1990, cited in Thomas & Soares, 2009).

Nearly half (46%) of the respondents stated 'other commitments' as reasons for late entry to higher education. It is surmised that financial constraints could have been a deterrent. According to Thomas and Soares (2009), there seems to be modest correlation between mature age of learners and low socio-economic status. The humble economic background of our learners will be discussed in the ensuing section.

### Empowering The Economically-Disadvantaged

Cost is frequently adduced as a factor that inhibits less well-off learners from pursuing higher education, leading to disparity of opportunity among social classes (Thomas & Soares 2009). ODL reduces the cost of learning and debunks the 'exclusivity' of higher education (ICDE, 2009). This is supported by the current study, which shows that 49% of the respondents indicated that they would not have been able to afford another programme. Cost, it would seem, is an important push factor as evidenced in another recent Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) survey, on those enrolling on Amity programmes, which showed that 43% admitted cost affordability as a prime attraction.

Interestingly our survey revealed that 67.6% of the respondents earn less than Rs20 000 monthly – an amount close to the current non-taxable income group (Rs19 700) decreed by the Mauritius Revenue Authority. At the same time, 42% of the respondents earn less than Rs15 000. The following table shows the income profile of the learners surveyed.

Table 2.  
Income group of learners surveyed (N=102)

	Undergraduate/ Diploma Programmes		Postgraduate Programmes		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
less than 15 000	40	50.0	3	13.6	43	42.2
15 000-20 000	20	25.5	6	27.3	26	25.5
21 000-30 000	9	11.3	9	40.9	18	17.6
31 000-40 000	7	8.8	1	4.5	8	7.8
above 40 000	2	2.5	1	4.5	3	2.9
N/A	2	2.5	2	9.2	4	3.9
Total	80	78.4	22	21.6	102	100.0

It would seem that diploma/undergraduate learners earn less than postgraduate ones, since only 18 (22.5%) of the 80 undergraduate learners earn above Rs21 000 compared with 50% of postgraduate learners who earn as much. This suggests that there is a relationship between earnings and educational qualifications. Another interesting fact is that only a minority earn more than Rs40 000. These economic characteristics suggest that MCA learners have a rather modest financial profile. MCA's non-profit orientation and ODL mandate are 'inclusionary' factors that enable the import of affordable programmes from prestigious overseas partners.

### Empowering the Qualifications-Challenged

Of the 102 respondents, only 10% did not have A-levels. They were able to access Diploma programmes and BSc Management through alternative qualifications and/ or recognition of work experience. These alternative routes, including the MCA-designed Certificate in Librarianship and Information Science and the Diploma in Management, aim "to bridge" the A-levels gap. These access routes have created opportunities for those

debarred entry to higher learning, giving them a chance to improve their socio-economic status. Aastha's story will exemplify this further.

### **Aastha**

Our 44-year old telephone interviewee, Aastha, was considered in this study as the voice of the less-privileged learners who are empowered through ODL.

Aastha comes from a low-income rural background. She left school after her O-levels, got married at the age of 19 and gave birth to three children. She accessed MCA's Diploma in Management programme on account of her work experience in the pre-primary sector. On completion of her diploma she was given a salary increment.

She is now in her first year of BSc Management, jointly offered by the MCA and the University of Technology, Mauritius.

ODL has enabled her to climb up two rungs of the tertiary ladder and increase her 'self-esteem'. Her socio-economic status has improved. She is now juggling family and work responsibilities whilst coping with undergraduate studies and looking after her seriously ill husband. Aastha says she would not have been able to afford higher education without the MCA.

### **CONCLUSION**

The survey has produced a rich yield of data and paved the way for further research on a number of issues. Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) has opened the doors of higher learning for the less privileged in terms of gender-based socio-economic burden, mature age, modest financial means and lack of formal qualifications. The conclusion of this study are aligned to Pityana's (cited in ICDE 2009) observation that 'perhaps what we as ODL practitioners acknowledge and what we quietly celebrate, is that the growth of ODL is testament to the demise of exclusivity in higher education provision'. Nevertheless, study also shows that more domains of flexible learning/ teaching remain to be explored to create still more opportunities. Decision-makers must lift constitutional, financial, and technological barriers to empower Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) to exploit further ODL possibilities.

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## **WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS IN DISTANCE HIGHER EDUCATION: An Exploratory Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Currently we know little about the role of women administrators in distance higher education. This exploratory study based on a sample of 26 women administrators provides data on their backgrounds, career ladders, mentoring experiences, administrative concerns, and their view of competencies needed in distance higher education administration. Leadership and faculty concerns were top priorities. The findings of the study indicate that comprehensive faculty and administrative training programs are needed for the design and delivery of distance education. Further development of interpersonal and communication skills need to be encouraged between all personnel in systems. Continued dialog is recommended to rethink and rework workloads, budgetary allocations and tenure criteria. The "Learning Organization" and its leadership model are recommended for implementation in building a new paradigm for the virtual education age.

**Keywords:** Women; women administrators; women administrators in distance education; women administrators in higher education.

### **THE LEARNING REVOLUTION**

Currently we are participating in the rise of the "Learning Revolution" driven by the exploding growth of distance education in higher education (Sloan Consortium, 2006). Distance education is normally defined as when students and instructors are separated and education takes place beyond the spaces of the campus or classroom. The Sloan Consortium (2006) indicated nearly 3.2 million students were enrolled in at least one online course during the fall 2005. A total and substantial increase over the 2.3 million reported in 2004. Thus, 700, 000 additional online students doubled the number of students added in any previous year. The 15th edition of Bear's Directory of Earning Degrees by Distance Education (2003), contains over 2, 500 listings of universities and colleges offering distance learning courses or degrees. Approximately 95% of four year colleges and universities offer distance education classes (NBC News, Dec. 31, 2007). Distance education, predicted to become the predominant mode of delivery by the year 2025, will significantly alter missions and infrastructures of colleges and universities, and the interactions of people working in higher education (Dunn 2000).

### **WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE**

The flood of women into the workplace over the past two decades has resulted in their becoming a "critical mass" in the white-collar professions (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1999, p .223). Pamela Pease, former President of Jones International University, which was the first totally online university to become accredited and led by Dr. Pease through the accreditation process stated, "It has been almost two decades since women have stepped



up to take a leadership role in the low profile field of "non traditional education" (Olcott and Hardy, 2006, p. 68).

Distance education in the early 1970's was little more than a correspondence effort with a subsequent technology assisted learning mode and then came the 90s and then the phenomenal surge of online education, of the millennium.

During the 1980s we began to see the structures and infrastructures of all types of organizations changing with the rapid thrust and growth of new technologies and women bringing into the labor market new values and new philosophies about leadership, management and organizational policies and practices. Women combined their values and capabilities with men and have, and are creating organizations with the values of a people approach to doing business (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1990 P. 219). The dominant principle of organization has shifted, from management in order to control an enterprise to leadership in order to bring out the best in people and to respond quickly To change. (p. 219).

### **ADMINISTRATORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Administrators make a difference in Learning. Research has shown that administrators make a difference especially in establishing the culture of the institution and their philosophy permeates the policies and practices of the institution, the division or the department.

Recent research by Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005 clearly show high correlations of the school leaders responsibilities of outreach, monitoring and evaluating, flexibility, discipline, culture, change agent with student academic achievement. In higher education the "seven principles of undergraduate education" (Chickering and Gamson 1987) clearly involve administrators to help to shape and are shaping the environment that is favorable to these good practices in higher education. In 2000 the Institute for Higher Education Policy published its Quality on The Line and offered its Benchmarks That are Essential for Quality Internet-based Distance Education in Internet. These Benchmarks of Institutional Support of course development, teaching/learning, course structure, student support, Faculty Support and Evaluation and Assessment clearly call for administrative involvement and planning.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Where are the women in distance-learning administration? Are they taking the lead in this rapidly growing enterprise? We know little about women in leadership positions in distance learning organizations. An exhaustive literature search produced no studies of distance learning women in administration, other than (Olcott and Hardy, 2006). The purpose of this exploratory study was to shed light on women in leadership positions in distance education:

- What are their concerns and challenges?
- What do they believe are the major competencies needed by women administrators?
- What attributes of leadership will be required in the developing, online educational systems of the future to support an environment of high academic achievement among students.

### **THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To provide a profile of women administrators in distance education the following set of research questions were developed to provide an initial framework for study:

- What are the backgrounds, career ladders, and years of service reported by women? Administrators in the study sample?
- Have women distance-education administrators been mentored for the positions they occupy? Have they mentored other prospective administrators?
- What do women administrators perceive as priority concerns in distance education?
- What do women distance-education administrators identify as necessary competencies and attributes for administrators today?

### Sample

In order to select a sample of women administrators in distance education it was necessary to identify colleges that had total, virtual education programs or specific units of distance instruction embedded in their institutions. The next step was to identify the current email addresses of the women administrators to be sampled.

The book, *Bear's Guide to Earning Degrees by Distance Learning*, (2003) provided a resource for selecting sample emails. The web sites of the sampled universities are listed in Chapter 18 (pp.95-153), "Accredited Schools with Degrees Entirely by Distance Learning" and Chapter 19 (pp154-184) "Accredited Schools with Short-Residency Programs". Email addresses were located that identified as women distance-learning administrators in U.S.A. institutions.

This identification process became a tedious process and sometimes a frustrating task, because current email addresses were not always available on the universities' web sites. Email addresses may be within the magazine subscription lists of the *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* or the *Distance Learning Association* and the attendees of their annual *International Forum on Women* held each year (IFWE). However, those email address lists are not available for use. Other helpful email addresses were retrieved from articles published in the *OJDLAA* <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla> a woman director in the investigator's distance-education university and emails of local women administrators in distance education were included in the list. Consequently, a total sample of 74 women administrators were identified with active, current emails.

### Questionnaire

A questionnaire, based on a review of the literature, was designed in January and February 2007. A draft of the questionnaire was sent to two colleagues who were to be asked to make suggestions and comments about the draft's validity and utility. One colleague was a retired Director of Adult Education. The second colleague was the CEO/President/Founder of a distance-learning, post-secondary institution. Several revisions were made to the drafted questionnaire. An online questionnaire format was selected to minimize the risk of respondents using file attachments that might distract or interfere with a spontaneous flow and rate of survey response. Survey Monkey.com, an online company, was contacted to format the questions for online implementation. The security executed by Survey Monkey.com protected confidentiality and prevented risks to respondents' identities before and after completing the questionnaire. The online questionnaire consisted of open-ended and forced-choice questions in order to collect data on respondents' age level, current positions, number of years in specific positions, years in distance education and traditional education, degrees, certificates, continuing education courses, mentoring experiences, perceived concerns, competencies, and attributes of distance-learning administrators.

### Data Collection

The first wave of cover letters to the selected sample described the survey briefly and invited them to participate. Cover letters were emailed on January 23 and 24, 2007. A second wave of cover letters with the questionnaire's online link was sent on January 25

and 26. Follow up letters were emailed on February 9-11 to the first wave of the sample and February 14 -18, 2007 to the second wave. Initially there were 76 cover letters with the online questionnaire link emailed to all the selected sample of women DL administrators. Two of the letters were returned, as the administrators were not directly involved in distance education administration. Twenty-six administrators or 35 % of the selected sample of 74 completed the survey. A colleague assisted with an SPSS program to perform descriptive statistics, primarily on forced-choice data. The author hand-tabulated the open-ended questions, which are presented here in their respective categorical frequencies and percentages. The sampling procedures used and small sample size necessarily limits interpretation and restricts any attempts to suggest causality or generalize from these exploratory questions and findings.

### The Background of Women Distance-Learning Administrators

Respondents were asked to state their present position, age level, and the number of years worked in their present administrative positions. The sample of 26 women administrators consisted of six presidents/vice-presidents/provosts; 10 directors with various titles in distance education; six deans and four coordinators.

### Age Groups

Respondents were asked to select their present age group. The following age group categories were used: under 30; 31-40; 41-50; 51-60; 61-70; over 70. As can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1.  
Age Grouping of Respondents

Age Level	Pres.VP Provost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals	%
Under 30	0	1	0	0	1	4
31-40	0	3	0	1	4	15
41-50	0	2	3	1	6	23
51-60	6	3	2	2	13	50
61-70	0	1	1	0	2	8
Over 70	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	6	10	6	4	26	100%

N=26 Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent

### Age Grouping of Respondents

All six respondents or 23% of the total sample, with the job title: president, vice-president, or provost fell in the 51-60 age group. Out of the entire sample 13 respondents or 50% of the sample appeared in the 51-60 age grouping, and six respondents or 23 percent were in the age 41-50 age grouping. It appears women administrators in DL have strong, experiential backgrounds in traditional and distance learning to guide them in their respective leadership positions.

### Length of Time in Current Position

Table 2.  
Position and Length of Time in Distance Learning Administrative Position

Length time in position	Pres. VP Provost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals	%
Under 1 yr	1	2	0	1	4	15
1 to 3yr	3	3	1	0	7	27
4-6yr	1	4	3	1	9	35
7-10 yr	0	0	1	2	3	12
Over 10yr.	1	1	1	0	3	12
Totals	6	10	6	4	26	100%

N=26 Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent

### Position and Length of Time in Distance Learning Administrative Positions

The length of time that the respondents of the study had spent in their present position varied. Note that only 4 respondents or 15% of the sample had been in their current positions under one year. It should be noted in Table 2 that three administrators, one with president/vice president/provost title and one director and one dean, or 12 % of the sample had spent over 10 years of time in their current, distance learning positions.

### Distance Learning and Traditional Learning Experience

Respondents were asked their experience in distance and traditional learning environments. For types of previous administrative positions held, the author found nine respondents, or 35 % of the sample, had administrative experience in both distance learning and traditional learning. Seven respondents, or 27 % of the sampled administrators, had experience only in distance learning compared with six administrators, or 23 % of the sample, with only traditional learning experience (Table 3).

**Table 3.**  
Distance Learning and Traditional Learning Experience

No. of Positions	Pres/VPProvost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals	%
DL and TL	4	2	2	1	9	35
Only DL	1	2	2	2	7	27
Only TL	1	4	1	0	6	23
None Listed	0	2	1	1	4	15
Totals	6	10	6	4	26	100%

N=26 Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent DL= Distance Learning TL=Traditional Learning

Four of the six (6) in the presidents/vice-presidents/provosts category had experience in both distance learning and traditional learning institutions. Four administrators, or 15 % of those sampled, 2 directors, 1 dean, and 1 coordinator had no previous administrative experience prior to their current position.

### Total Years in Distance Learning Positions and Traditional Learning Positions

Respondents were asked to specify the number of years in each position in distance learning and traditional learning. One president/vice-president/provost had worked 19 years in distance- learning prior to her present administrative position. One director had served 15 years in distance-learning positions.

**Table 4.**  
Total years in Distance Learning Positions

Total Years	Pres/VP Provost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals
0	1	6	1	1	9
1	0	0	1	1	2
2	1	0	0	0	1
3	1	3	1	0	3
5	0	1	0	0	1
6	1	1	0	0	2
7	0	0	1	1	2
10	1	0	1	0	2
11	0	0	1	0	2
15	0	1	0	0	1
19	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	6	10	6	4	26

N=26 Number of years for each position (months rounded up to a year)

One dean had worked for 11 years in prior distance-education positions. These years of experience suggested that women have been leaders in the “non-traditional” educational enterprise from early start up and low-profile years.

As displayed in Table 4. nine of the respondents had been only a few months in distance learning before assuming present distance-learning, administrative positions. The nine consisted of one president/vice-president/provost designation, six with director titles, one dean, and one coordinator.

### Total Years in Distance Learning Positions

The data suggested that long years of experience in distance learning have not been required for distance learning, administrative positions in some institutions. As for the number of years spent in traditional learning positions, the author found one president/vice-president/provost and one director who each had spent 20 years in traditional learning and another president/vice-president/provost respondent who had toiled 28 years in traditional learning prior to becoming a president in distance learning.

**Table 5.**  
**Total Years in Traditional Learning Positions**

Total Years	Pres/ VPProvost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals
0	1	5	3	3	11
2	0	1	0	0	1
3	0	1	0	0	2
4	0	1	0	0	1
5	1	0	0	0	1
6	1	0	0	0	1
7	1	0	0	0	1
9	0	0	1	0	1
10	0	0	0	1	1
11	0	0	1	0	1
12	0	1	0	0	1
14	0	0	1	0	1
18	0	1	0	0	1
20	1	1	0	0	2
28	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>

N= 26 Total number of years. Months rounded up to the nearest year.

### Total Years in Traditional Learning Positions

An outstanding finding (Table 5.) is that eleven administrators, or 42 % of the sample, had only few months in traditional learning before accepting distance-learning positions. While remaining administrators’ total years in traditional learning prior to current distance-learning positions ranged from 1 to 28. Clearly it appears the movement and promotion into distance-learning administration has not required traditional-learning experience in some educational institutions.

### Career Ladders

Another study question focused on career ladders for women in distance-learning administration. Are career ladders for women similar or different than traditional-learning environments? In traditional learning situations the movement into administrative positions often follows faculty rankings, and in many universities administrators develop significant experience in prior faculty roles. In traditional education faculty move through the ranks from assistant to full professor and with academic achievement gain experience in specialized research and diverse teaching areas (Warner and De Fleur, 1993, p. 5).

Some faculty members who have been department chairs have an advantage to move on into administration. Warner and De Fleur (1993, p. 5) found many senior administrators moved from one of the liberal arts disciplines. The fields of English, chemistry and history usually have had the greatest representation.

In the sample of distance-learning administrators, (Table 6) 0, 10 respondents, or 38% of the sample, had been former faculty members. Sixteen respondents, or 62% of the sample, had never been in faculty positions prior to assuming their current administrative positions.

**Table 6.**  
Faculty Member Prior to Current Administrative Position

	Pres VP/ Provost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals	%
Yes	3	4	2	1	10	38
No	3	6	4	3	16	62
Totals	6	10	6	4	26	100%

N=26 Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent

### Faculty Member Prior to Current Administrative Position

The investigator discovered administrators who previously held faculty positions represented a diverse group of academic types. Faculty positions appeared not to reflect academic pathways profiled in traditional administration career ladders. Reported teaching areas included English, developmental writing, business management, organization behavior, leadership, environmental design, play theories, creativity, research methods, political science, cooperative education, business education, psychology, chemistry, interpersonal communication, and leadership in higher education administration.

Respondents who reported they had never been in a faculty or non-teaching position were asked, "What was the title of your position prior to your administrative position?" There were a variety of non-teaching positions stated:

### Non-Teaching Positions

Coordinator of outreach services, always in administration, human resources administration, office assistant, director of child-care center, financial aid counselor, administrative assistant, always the director, until they changed title to dean.

### Certificate in Leadership/Administration Management

The next question asked whether the respondent had a certificate in leadership/administration and to select the appropriate degree from a list. Out of the total sample 16 respondents, or 62%, had an appropriate degree or certificate in leadership/administration. These certified administrators included three in the president/vice-president/provost category, 5 directors, five deans, and three coordinators. Nine respondents, or 35 %, did not have a degree or certificate in /leadership administration/management.

**Table 7.**  
Degree or Certificate in Leadership/Administration//Management

	Pres.VP/ Provost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals	%
Yes	3	5	5	3	16	62
No	2	5	1	1	9	35
Other	1	0	0	0	1	3
Totals	6	10	6	4	26	100%

N=26 Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent

### Degree or Certificate in Administration/Leadership/Management

Participants who had degrees in administration or leadership/management certificates were asked to select their degree or certificate from a list.

#### Type of Degree or Certificate

It was found that 35% had a Ph.D. in Administration and 38% earned other degrees (Table 8.).

Other degrees reported, in addition to the degrees listed, included: MS Public Relations, Bachelor of Business Administration, Master Business Education, Master of Public Administration, (, p.2) MPA, MS Online Education.

**Table 8.**  
**Type of Degree or Certificate in Leadership, Administration or Management**

Degree	Pres. VP /Provost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals	%
M.S.	0	2	0	0	2	12
MED	0	0	1	0	1	6
MBA	0	1	1	0	2	12
Ph.D.	2	2	2	0	6	35
EdD	1	0	0	0	1	6
Other	1	0	1	3	5	29
Totals	4	5	5	3	17	100%

N= 17 Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent

#### Type of Degree or Certificate in Administration or Management

These findings suggest that women administrators in distance education have a variety of appropriate credentials to do distance-learning, administrative jobs.

#### Continuing and Professional Education

With the need for continuing education and professional development activities in new, changing areas of technology and communications, the investigator asked the respondents to list the continuing education and training courses in leadership/administration, or management, they had taken to-date.

The continuing education courses and training seminars in leadership/ administration or management were reported by 11 or 42% % of respondents and are listed below:

- HERS West Community College Women's Leadership Academic Management Institute
- Multicultural Organizational Development, Consensus mediation training.
- Numbers workshop, city leadership programs, college leadership programs
- Harvard Institute on Leadership in Continuing Education
- Leadership Effectiveness Training, Advanced Certificate in Organization Design, Executive Leadership Certification
- American Management Association Zebra-Miller Management Training (in house)
- Harvard Leadership Conference Linkage Leadership Workshop
- Fred Pryor Seminars in Effective Leadership, Dealing with Difficult Employees
- Harvard Educational Leadership
- Distance Learning Certified Trainer Certificate in Distance Learning
- Other training programs included: Financial Management for Education Leaders, Online Teaching Certificate, Managing Enrollments, Corporate Strategy, Situational Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Knowledge Management, Assessment, Curriculum Design for Online Learning
- Certified Public Accountant, Continuing Education, Extensive Education Leadership courses

### Mentoring

Of interest to this researcher was the mentoring factor. Mentoring looms large in the distance-learning literature, and the training of administrators and is considered essential to the development of the effective performance of administrators (Cunningham, (2006, p.82); Beaudoin, (2003, p. 2); Thom, (2001, p. 82); Kouzes and Posner, (1988, p. 288); Astin and Leland, 1991 pp 47-53; Bower, 1993 maintained, "for women in academic administration in higher education, mentoring is a very important way to "make it" in a world not necessarily familiar or accommodating" (p. 91). The sample of women administrators in this study was asked if they had been mentored for an administrative position in distance learning. Only 4 respondents, or 15 % of the sample administrators, had been mentored and 22 respondents, or 85 % of the sample, had not been mentored (Table 9). Administrators who had been mentored were asked to describe their mentoring situations.

**Table 9.  
Mentored Administrators**

Title	Pres/VP Provost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals	%
Yes	2	0	2	0	4	15
No	4	10	4	4	22	85
Totals	6	10	6	4	26	100%

N= 26 Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent

### Mentored Administrators

Mentored administrators described their mentoring scenarios in ways illustrative of their job responsibilities and situations. Descriptions reported from these situations included:

- My boss took special time to train me once I was in the field.
- The former dean mentored me regarding distance-learning initiatives and teaching via distance learning.
- In the Ph.D. program I had a senior woman colleague who was Director of Adult Learning. She helped inspire me.
- Myself as Dean of Psychology, VPAA mentor

Whereas only four respondents, or 15 % of our sample of women administrators, had been mentored, Eight (8) respondents, or 31 % of the sample, had currently taken on the responsibility of mentoring candidates for distance-learning administrative position (Table 10).

- Do these findings indicate a lingering need for some women in administrative positions to feel they could have benefited more from earlier mentoring in their careers?
- Are some women administrators fulfilling this need proactively, in part, by taking on the responsibility to mentor prospective distance-learning administrators?
- To mentor candidates who then may go on to succeed them in their positions, and/or are they sufficiently groomed to go forward into new, administrative positions in distance education?

**Table 10.  
Mentoring a Candidate for an Administrative Role**

Title	Pres/VP Provost	Director	Dean	Coordinator	Totals	%
Yes	3	2	3	0	8	31
No	3	8	3	4	18	69
Totals	6	10	6	4	26	100%

N= 26 Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent



### **Mentoring a Candidate for an Administrative Role**

Respondents were asked to briefly describe their mentoring of candidates. These brief, general descriptions suggest only a few of the various, informal ways and levels that mentoring might occur in different settings.

Mentoring Situations follow:

- Support of faculty, staff, and mid-level administrative positions
- Graduate students who work here on a part-time basis.
- I nudge the person to try new things, read more on distance learning, to think outside the box.
- My assistant will take over my position when I leave in 6 months time.
- Director of Admissions and Marketing This individual has accepted additional tasks and responsibilities.
- We have a number of PT faculties. Some of my middle-level, administrative-types who I'm mentoring I have also worked with some graduate students in this role.
- In my interactions with the two women that work with me. I encourage them to come to me with solutions and rationale to situations, rather than asking me for a solution.
- They are supported to take more leadership in areas of their expertise.
- I am currently mentoring a new dean whose duties and responsibilities include student services, registrar, and financial services. This person is being groomed to be a vice-president.

### **Concerns of Women Distance Learning Administrators**

A priority area of exploratory interest were the concerns of women administrators today while the distance-learning revolution transforms the academy.

The field of distance education is filled with discussions and research about faculty concerns and their needs. One has only to review the titles of the articles in the OJDLA <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdl> a quarterly, distance-learning journal with 1001 subscribers in 32 countries.

Several illuminating titles have suggested faculty concerns for administrators: "Factors Motivating and Inhibiting Faculty in Offering Their Courses via Distance Education," (Bruner, 2007); "Conditions for Success of Online Mentoring a Case Study," (Nchindila, 2007); "Barriers to Online Teaching in Post-Secondary Institutions: Can Policy Changes Fix it?" (Berge, 1998); "Informal Faculty Mentoring as a Component of Learning to Teach Online," (Thompson, 2007); "Managing Virtual Adjunct Faculty Applying the Seven Principles of Good Practice," (Puzziforro-Schnitzer, (2005); "Best Practices for Administration Evaluation of Online Faculty," (Tobin, 2004); "Distance Education, Facing the Faculty Challenge, Bower, (2001); Motivation and Incentives for Distance Faculty; Parker (2003) and from Distance Education, the official publication of the United States Distance Learning Association, the article, "What Shall We Do? Faculty Concerns and Sound Solutions," (Moreland and Saleh, 2007).

### **Leadership Concerns**

One, over-arching concern in the literature and among practitioners in distance education has been the need to identify a working model and definition of leadership in distance learning. Beaudoin, (2003) offered a lengthy and comprehensive review of the literature. He sent out a poignant call for all to focus more on new kinds of leadership styles and more research on leadership skills and practices demanded in distance education. However, he fell into his own trap by recommending only old, individualistic, male-oriented leadership models generated from an earlier industrial era. He wrote highly of the "transformational leadership" of Bennis and Nanus (1985) and the "Situational Leadership" model of Hersey and Blanchard (1977).

However, in my view, we must delete these male-dominant, individualistic type models from our cognitive, social, educational, and experiential systems. We need to adopt a new paradigm of leadership befitting the educational organizations now emerging in this century.

Researchers have brought to our attention some of the needed attributes of distance-education leaders to meet the new types of tasks demanded of administrators in the information society and cyber cultures where they must perform. However, researchers generally have been thinking with out-dated, leadership paradigms, along the lines of individualistic leaders of a by-gone era Pahal, (1999), Portugal, (2006). Marcus, (2004) concluded her literature review by stating:

*"In summary, the question of what a distance education leader is, the characteristics of such, the requirements of such, and the actions of an effective distance education leader still have not been adequately found." P. 31*

### **Respondent Concerns**

The respondents in this study were asked to report two or three of their administrative/management concerns about distance-learning administrators. Respondents were not asked to rank these concerns. Two respondents reported four concerns respectively. Three respondents did not reply to the question. There were 47 total concerns listed. The reported survey concerns were entered into nominal categories. The highest number of respondent concerns (n= 12) and 26 % of all concerns expressed appeared in both of the categories of Faculty/Personnel and Leadership. Student learning had 9 concerns or 19% of the total number of concerns reported. Communication/Interpersonal had 5 concerns or 11 % of the total number reported. 6 respondents or 13% the total number reported expressed financial concerns Survey respondents shared only 3 concerns about technology and that number represented only 6% of the total number of concerns reported.

A detailed breakdown of the respective categories and the content of these concerns for each category is presented below.

### **Faculty/Personnel Issues 26%**

Obtaining new online programs, Department chairs not interested, Ensuring academic excellence with disbursement of staff, Management of dispersed team of department chairs, and leaders; Ensure faculty use best methodologies for instruction. Ideas not credited, but passed off as own by supervisor; Lack of community practice or support; Administrative cooperation/minimize competition; Motivation of distance-learning faculty, Faculty training and support policies; Assisting staff to understand online a method of delivery; Faculty understands online environment equal to traditional environments.

### **Leadership 26%**

Working collaboratively with colleges; Balancing internal/external views/ partnerships; Managing change; Changing traditional organizational culture; Dispel myth of online education is of lower quality than traditional education; Protecting all from undue attention of comparisons with traditional education; Working with accredits to understand dynamics of distance-learning marketing; Most effective online marketing; Competition is increasing in marketing decisions; Clarity and consideration of institutional values and principles; Proactively support diversity and self-reflection on issues of diversity and inclusion, job description and evaluation. Ability to communicate learning theories.

### **Student Learning/Curriculum 19%**

Assessment requirements (reported twice), Maintenance of quality, Student services-flexibility Academic excellence programs Online equal to traditional learning Program growth-scalability/quality, Retention of students, Mentor and develop an environment of learning

### **Financial 13%**

Funding (state), Remuneration to reflect time spent (faculty), Paying staff adequately, Shrinking budgets in higher education, Distance learning impact, Monies-faculty buy- ins.

### **Communication/Interpersonal 11%**

Connecting students and faculty via distance-learning methods, Distance communication's potential for misunderstanding, Impersonality of distance education and effect on relationship building, Building consensus, Better support and communication system between locations and main campus.

### **Technology 6%**

Keeping up with technology (reported twice) and How to keep up with Technology many of these Faculty and Personnel concerns are consistent with the articulated article titles cited from the Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration. For example a prime area of faculty concern was faculty training and support policies. Another general concern was providing staff more knowledge and a greater understanding of what distance learning is all about.. The concerns expressed for managing a dispersed team of department chairs and leaders indicated Administrator's need for more experience and personal confidence in managing staff in various online modes and settings. The day in which an administrator needs to watch a faculty member to manage the workflow has gone with the 20th century.

### **Competencies Needed for Distance-Learning Administrators**

The literature suggests there are new competencies needed for administrators and leaders of distance-education organizations. Pahal (1999) maintained that IT leaders for the new millennium should possess the following characteristics: vision, integrity, trust, selflessness, commitment, creativity, open-mindedness, toughness, ability to communicate, ability to listen, be a calculated risk -taker, innovative visibility, inquisitiveness, intuition, action-orientation, candidness, tenaciousness and the ability to network. Portugal (2006.p. 4) forecasted that emerging leaders in distance education will need to be well versed in the business functions of their universities so online systems and structures operated smoothly and effectively for students, faculty and support staff. In addition, she suggested that finding and keeping qualified staff in an online environment would be another skill to acquire for emerging leaders in distance education.

Beaudoin (2003) maintained that leaders must create conditions conducive to energy, initiative, and innovation in their particular milieu and bring others along, both above and below them in the organizational hierarchy. Furthermore, Beaudoin (2003, p. 6)) stressed that distance-education leaders must "see themselves, and be seen, as educational leaders, who are less directing and more motivating. They must facilitate the articulation, development, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning shared and supported by a wider academic community." At this juncture Beaudoin (2003, p. 6) approaches the leadership notions of the "Learning Organization" model of Peter Senge (1990) to be proposed in the next section.

### **Competencies for Distance Education Administration**

The samples of surveyed respondents were asked to state the competencies they believed are important for distance-learning administrators.

Surprisingly four of these administrators did not respond to the question, and one respondent offered only two responses. A total of 62 competencies were listed.

The categorization of the competency responses are as follows:

The largest category of competencies listed and 37 % of the total number of responses available was in the Leadership Qualities and Attributes Category. 37%

Other categories of competencies included:

Experience and Knowledge 26 %

Building Relationships 18 %

Communication Skills 11 %

Management /Organization skills 8 %

Technology 6%

The actual responses are described in each of the categories below.

#### **Leadership Qualities and Attributes 37%**

Integrity for Quality, Risk-taker, Willing to try new things and assess them, Flexibility, willing to resolve issues, Ability to manage life and time, Flexibility, willing to resolve issues, Require instruction and training for content and delivery for all faculty who instruct in online education, assertiveness, clarity of thinking in problem solving, Practical awareness of human nature, Agility, Entrepreneurial spirit, Sense of humor, Flexibility, Visionary, Putting quality first over enrolment numbers, Transformational leader, Broad vision, Multi-talented, Patience, Search for new opportunities, Organizational insight, Patience, Creativity in maximizing the online environment for maximum student service, Leadership ability to communicate, knowledge and learning theories

#### **Experience and Knowledge 26 %**

Understanding of the field, Teaching experience in class and online, Working knowledge of course system to help others in management, Understanding of all administrative systems relevant to off-campus studies, Understand all programs offered to off-campus students, Knowledge of distance education, Duration online learning experiences, Adequate training and experience with all aspects of the model, Knowledge of the field, online teaching experience (twice reported) Online course creation experience, Administrative experience pre-distance learning, Understand university processes, Keeping apprised of what is happening in the world of distance learning and accreditation that may impact online institutions, Knowledge of budgetary consideration for sustainability and impact.

#### **Building Relationships- Faculty and Students 18%**

Understand faculty thinking about traditional roles and emerging roles, Good working relations with administration faculty and students offering new distance courses and programs, Recognize that involvement and interaction from faculty is necessary for learners to connect, Ensure that all students understand learning can occur through online instruction, An ethic of care for faculty and students in distance education, Availability and promptness of response to problems, advising skills, Motivate and encourage students through difficult aspects of learning, Collegial community building, Building relationships, Self-reflective regarding diversity and team building.

#### **Communication Skills 11%**

Be able to communicate effectively on ground and online, Communicate well with students, Effective face-to-face and distance communication, Diplomacy, Ability to foster authentic dialog regarding values and principles, Communicate knowledge and learning theories.

### **Management and Organization Skills 8%**

Written and verbal organizational skills, Efficient time management and organizational skills, Managing and motivating faculty whom are accustomed to instructing students in a classroom Organizational skills, Time management.

### **Technology 6%**

Understand technology, Adaptability and flexibility with technology faculty and administration, Willingness to try new technology, Strong interest in technology Student/faculty support through technological change/Clearly these administrative/leadership priorities articulated by these women administrators strongly reflect the need for systems, individual institutions and team leaders to dialog more to assess the specific needs of specific units.

The second step would be to have a team of knowledgeable persons, who are knowledgeable of a specific educational system, and skilled in the delivery mode of distance education delivers tutorials, seminars, and one on one instruction to faculty involved and those to be involved in distance education in order to build positive attitudes. This team of teachers would be continually available to help where needed for growth and development of distance learning capabilities of all members.

This team would change composition periodically as members become more skilled and capable in the distance learning enterprise. These teachers will be the new distance learning leaders of tomorrow based on the Senge (1990) model of the "Learning Organization."

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study showed that women administrators could be found at all administrative ranks in distance education. They are continuing their education and as entrepreneurs investing in human capital (Reimers-Hild, C., Fritz, S., King, J.2007). Some women administrators are engaged in mentoring other candidates for distance-learning administrative positions.

This finding could signal a new trend in leadership commitments through relationships and roles mentoring others. The concerns by the sample of administrators were found to be similar to concerns published in the literature in diverse distance-learning contexts. Leadership and Faculty/personnel issues, the highest number of concerns, are supported by the ever present needs for more faculty information, dialogue, and flexible leadership including specific distance-education skills. Most important were the needs expressed for continued dialogue between all units and external systems, and persons at all levels of participation in the distance-learning organization for the purpose of more effective student learning.

Another, important implication from this study is that in a general sense the concerns and priority competencies identified by these administrators can help us to identify areas we need to address and facilitate the blending of leadership skills that are no longer gender specific Muriel Oaks, in (Olcott and Hardy, 2006 p, 71) an interview stated, "Leadership differences are as much generational as gender related."

These findings appear to support the view that we need to be thinking about blending the traditional values of men and women in leadership modalities, (Harris, Smith, Hale, 2002, (Colwill, Townsend, 1999) and how to create new cultures to sustain and nurture new leadership paradigms.

New types of leadership models cannot exist without observable skills and supportive organizational cultures. Values of self-knowledge, building relationships,

facilitation and empowering others are becoming recognized as essential skills for all leaders and managers. (Colwill, Townsend, 1999).

The male-dominant leadership model is as vestigial as the industrial age's mid-level supervisor. These antiquated notions of "situational leadership or transformational leadership" were proposed to lead people who did not have any vision. These ideas do not work any more in organizations of the information age. We need to do more than to look for easy solutions to organizational problems; it is time to begin to create new dynamic leadership models supported by flexible systems.

Further research should be done on needs of distance learning administrators and faculty at all levels. The results should be used to design graduate programs in Educational Administration in higher education in addition to designing new continuing education seminars in leadership and management. A review of the promotion and tenure system in American higher education is long due and recommendations are needed for this information age. Faculty workloads need to be reviewed and time allocated for faculty to continue training to expand their skills and abilities, in all areas of the distance learning enterprise. Budget systems in higher education at all levels need to be reviewed and new priorities set for this millennium.

#### **THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP AS A NEW PARADIGM**

To create a new paradigm of leadership we simultaneously need to develop a new form of culture to sustain and develop new leadership modes. Many of us still work in bureaucratic, controlling type cultures, which endorse old models of leadership. I propose distance education leaders study, and begin to implement the culture and leadership model proposed for a "Learning Organization" advocated by Peter Senge (1990). Senge, (1990) and colleagues at MIT, a decade ago, proposed, researched, and developed a model which corresponds and complements the leadership and organizational/cultural needs in the Distance-education enterprise this millennium and will address in the long run the concerns found in this research.

This "Learning Organization" model is grounded in team learning and team leadership. In this form of organization leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. The learning organization is a place where people at all levels of the organization are continually growing and expanding their capacity to create the results they together want in their organization. Senge (1990 p. 5) maintains that what distinguishes a "learning organization" from current "controlling or authoritarian organizations" is the mastery of five Disciplines. When people master these disciplines collective learning is brought about and teams can learn. He discusses these disciplines in the book, *The Fifth Discipline* (pp. 5-13).

These disciplines summarized below are from Senge's descriptions;

- **Systems thinking:** This is the fifth discipline that integrates the other four disciplines. It is the conceptual framework with the tools that help people to understand by looking at the whole, not just individual parts of the system.
- **Personal mastery:** A commitment to realize the things that matter to people and commitment to lifelong learning.
- **Mental models:** These are the images, or stereotypes deeply entrenched in our minds about people and behavior. These models influence how we think about and react to things. We need to engage in introspection and dig up our mental models and

scrutinize them. Then we are able explore these mental models with others and carry on dialogue and become more receptive to others' ideas

- **Building a shared vision:** Building a shared vision has always been an important aspect of leadership. It is the capacity of people to hold a shared picture of the future that all seek creating a shared vision and mission can bind people together in a common identity.
- **Team learning:** This discipline starts with "dialogue" which Senge (1990, p. 19) defined as "the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine thinking together." (p. 10) In the process of dialogue people learn how to identify patterns of interaction that can undermine learning. Senge (1990, p. 10)) maintains team learning is critical because teams are the basic learning unit and unless they can learn, the organization cannot learn.

Where does one start to implement with this model? How do we begin the development of? A "Learning Organization". I believe that the best place to start is with is your unit or team, and Begin to practice suspending judgements, dialoguing, and practicing team learning. In *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (1994), written by Senge and colleagues, are exercises for you and your team or unit to practice in order to build a " Learning Organization."

## LEADERS IN LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

Leaders are designers, stewards and teachers in the "learning organization." They have commitments and responsibilities for building organizations where people continue to expand and develop their capabilities. According to Senge, (1990, p.340), The first leadership act will be taking a stand for building a "Learning Organization."

Administrative leaders design and implement learning processes for the people in their organization so they are able to deal with issues and solve problems faced in the ever changing distance-learning revolution. Leaders become stewards of the vision of the learning organization. This vision becomes the leaders' specific commitment to teach others about the larger picture in a mutually- reciprocal and joint learning network. (Senge, 1990)

This leadership model of collective team making decisions and leaders as designers, stewards and teachers is a different approach than the hierarchical leader making the decisions and setting the goals and energizing the troops. This collective network of leaders can become a powerful force in building the cultures and infrastructures for learning organizations, which can deliver quality distance education in a global marketplace.

### Acknowledgements

I thank my colleagues who assisted me with this research. Dr. Ruth Huffman-Hine, a former director of adult education, and Dr. Margaret Morabito, the founder and CEO of Cal Campus, a total virtual postsecondary institution. Both reviewed and commented on the draft questionnaire. I also thank the late Dr. David Johnson for his assistance on the statistical work, and editing of the final draft.

### WOJDE editor's Note:

#### [Emine Demiray March 8, 2012 at 6:58 am](#)

We would like reprint an article in our journal int.WOJDE with non-commercial purposes which is titled as Women Administrators in Distance Higher Education- an Exploratory Study and written by Dr. LaWanna Lease Blount and published AWL Journal No. 28, Summer 2008 by giving our thanks and bibliographic citation with

Hope to hear soon,  
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**Dr. LaWanna LEASE BLOUNT**, B.S., M.S., Ph.D., F.Coll.T.

**VICE PRESIDENT/CO-FOUNDER** Dr. Blount was one of the founders of Akamai University, a virtual university headquartered in Hilo, Hi, especially the Center for Education and Literacy and the Division of Continuing and Professional Education. She founded the Bachelor of Arts in Genealogical Studies and with her colleague genealogists, the Master of Arts in Genealogical Studies at this University. Through her initiatives the Academic Council was founded, and she chaired this governance body for five years. Previously she taught sociology at Connors State College, Muskogee, Oklahoma, and taught in the graduate program of Human Resource Management at Chapman University, Carlsbad, California. She taught at the Western Australian College of Advanced Education (Edith Cowan University), in Perth, Western Australia where she was also the founder and chair of the Master's Degree Program in Educational Administration. She was a Research Officer and an Education Officer with the Technical Education Division in Perth, Western Australia, and an Associate Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management.

Her early career was spent teaching in Venezuela and Libya for Exxon Corporation. Dr. Blount has written and published two family history/genealogy books titled: *The History of the Blount Family, Bountiful, Utah: Family History Publishers, 2001* and *The Leases and Related Families, Bountiful, Utah: Family History Publishers, 1998*. She is a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, The National Genealogical Society, and the Texas State Genealogical Society.

Dr. Blount is also a reviewer for the Belgrade Institute of Economic Sciences, *Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education*. She has presented papers and written many articles in education, educational administration, and genealogy. In 2006, she compiled the book, *Notable Women of Polk County, Texas*, sponsored by the Polk County American Association of Women (AAUW).

Dr. Blount's current book is *Why I Became a Professional Genealogist, A Case Study, (of 91 professional genealogists)*, Bloomington: iuniverse, Inc. (2009). In 2007, Dr. Blount was invited to participate in the "People to People" delegation to China of "Women in Higher Education". Dr. Blount is also working as an external doctoral committee member at Touro University.

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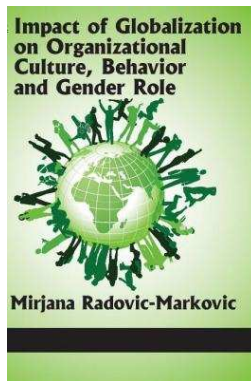
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## IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, BEHAVIOR AND GENDER ROLE

**Mirjana RADOVIC-MARKOVIC, *Impact Of Globalization on Organizational Culture, Behavior And Gender Role*, Institute of Economic Sciences, January 2012, Information Age Publishing, Inc. ISBNs: Paperback: 978-1-61735-695-7, Hardcover: 978-1-61735-696-4, E-Book: 978-1-61735-697-1, 150 pages, 134, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA.**

**Reviewed by Assoc. Prof. Dr. T. Volkan YUZER  
Anadolu university, Open education  
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The "new" in new economy means a more stable and longer growth, with more jobs, lower inflation and interest rates, explosion of free markets worldwide, the unparalleled access to knowledge through the Internet and new type of organization which affects organizational change. Organizational change is the adoption of an organizational environment for the sake of survival. Namely, the old principles no longer work in the age of Globalization. Businesses have reached the old model's limits with respect to complexity and speed. At the same time, the challenge which new economy brings to small businesses managers is the use of new business approach and the strong will for organizational changes and adaptation to global market demands. There are several types of organizational changes that can occur- strategic changes, organizational cultural changes; involve organizational structural change, a redesign of work tasks and technological changes. In line with these changes, there is strong expectation of employee to permanent improve their knowledge and become an integral part of successful business formula in order to respond to the challenges brought by the global economy. It means a request for learning organization which is characterized as an organization creating, gaining and transferring the knowledge, and thus constantly modifying the organizational behavior. Reader will refine their theoretical understanding of globalization by studying its concrete manifestations in three domains: organizational culture, behavior, and gender.

This book underlines old principles become not to give meaningful solutions to the problems which arise in the global age. The business area is one of the areas in which there is a search to restructure the organizational demands through globalization. This is a need to reach success for organizations and companies. On the other hand, companies are convicted to be unsuccessful because of misunderstanding the rules of the global age. Therefore, this book emphasizes how to be a winner in the global age among millions of the organizations.

Learning is one of the key concepts to be a winner. It brings competitive advantages in the market both the individuals and the companies. It is important to spread the knowledge the whole of the organization from the managers to the workers to be successful.

**This book also explains how to share the knowledge among persons. The better way is to use modern technologies, the Internet dominantly.**

**The Internet gains its place in daily life usage among persons especially in developed and developing countries. People use the Internet for different communication purposes in their daily life. They may use it for sending emails, watching the news, reaching bank accounts, gathering lifelong education contents etc. Since the people use this communication environment, it is an eligible medium to spread and share the knowledge in the organizations and companies.**

**The internet is also useful to reach the persons wherever they are in the world. People have knowledge in synchronous or asynchronous communications with text-based or audio-visual methods. This is another reason to use the Internet among the prospective learners who need to have beneficial knowledge.**

**This book is divided four parts to explain globalization on organizations.**

- **First part is Organizational Culture. Organizational culture is an important factor since its understanding is a key role when managers are willing to know the organization better. This knowledge directs them to manage the global organizations successfully. In global organizations, there are different cultures among workers and managers have to find solutions to manage people from different cultures to achieve the goals of the organizations.**
- **Second part is Organizational Behavior. Global organizations bring diverse people together. These diverse persons have different values, beliefs, and ethics. Besides, there are gender, age, race, ethnicity differences among them. (This part is connected to the first part of the book as a spectrum of cultural issues). Management of diverse people gives new roles to the leaders in the organizations. This part of the book also explains the leadership of the women as global players.**
- **Globalization and Gender Role is the third part. Knowledge economy, information society, informal sector and learning society with gender roles are the keywords of this part. There are many factors on gender roles in the world. With the knowledge sharing, globalization may have some positive effects on gender roles.**
- **Education for Global Tasks is the last part. Entrepreneurship is a valuable position in the global economy. Moreover, new skills in changing business environments are important. Enhancing learning skills are also important in the global world and the Internet become important to educate the people from distant. This part of the book highlights the position of e-learning in the globalization.**

**In the end, this book explains the ways to take correct decisions in the global age. Thinking, organizing, changing, responding and training globally is underlined in the book. It is very helpful for the people who want to understand how organizations can be global. Guiding principles are shown in the book to the managers, leaders and organizations who prefer to be global than the local.**

**This book is recommended for professionals, researchers and students who are willing to comprehend better the globalization of organizations. Besides it is very useful for people who want to understand women leadership in global area. Moreover, persons seek further information on the Internet and e-learning in the global world should read this book.**

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## BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRESSES of the BOOK AUTHOR



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Mirjana **RADOVIC MARKOVIC**, B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D., D.Sc. (hon.), D.Litt. (hon.), F.R.S.A. Full Professor Mirjana Radovic-Markovic PhD was born in Belgrade. She gained complete expert education from the Faculty of Economics in Belgrade, where she got her PhD in 1987. After her dissertation completing, she continued her advanced studies in the Netherlands, USA and Russia, where she specialized in 1988 at Lomonosow on the multidisciplinary studies department. Since she was twenty-five she is a scientist. Her scientific career started at the Economics Institute in Belgrade and continued later at the Institute of Economic Sciences, also in

Meanwhile, she was full-time and part-time engaged as a lecturer and professor for entrepreneurship and management at the Faculty for Management BK in Belgrade, at the Faculty Farleigh Dickinson University in the USA, Akamai University US, Lacrosse University USA, Pebble Hills University International, EU, CalCampus, US. She is an author of programs as follow: "Women's Entrepreneurship", "Human Resource Management", "Small Business Management", "Entrepreneurship for Genealogists", "Organizational Behaviour", "E-Business" and "Principles of Management". Since 2004, prof. Dr. Mirjana Radovic-Markovic has employed full time at the Institute of Economic Sciences. She is Chairman of Scientific Board, Head of Center for Economic Researches and member of the Managing Board of the Institute of Economic Sciences. Also, she is Editor-in-Chief of peer Journals: Economic Analysis and Women's Entrepreneurship and Education and the editor of five international peer journals, of which one is on the Thomson Reuters list. She was elected to the position of full professor in a number of universities- She teaches "Entrepreneurship" at the University of Kragujevac, as well as the "Applied Business Economics and Entrepreneurship" at the Irish University Business School, London, "Management and Entrepreneurship" at the Pebble Hills University International, EU, "Female entrepreneurship" at Akamai University, and "Entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship" at the International College of Management and Technology (ICMT)-Center for Women and Gender Studies. In addition, she has taught worldwide classes as "Women as Entrepreneurs", "Global Challenge" (GVF) at the Faculty Farleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey, US. By invitation, she has given a number of lectures abroad. Recently, she had presentation during the meeting of OECD experts (March, 2010) and gave a lecture at Said Business School (June, 2010), Oxford University, UK. Professor Radović-Marković has written twenty books and over one hundred peer articles. Professor's new book is WOMEN IN BUSINESS: Theory, Practice and Flexible Approaches, published by Adonis & Abbey Publishers Ltd, June 2010. London, UK.. Prof. Dr Mirjana Radovic-Markovic is elected to the World Association of International Studies (WAIS), Stanford University, USA. Dr. Mirjana RADOVIC MARKOVIC  
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## SUCCESS STORY

### OF THE 49 YEARS OLD

**Nursing License Completion Program (HELITAM) have started to accept students in 2009-2010 Academic Year. The program has been conducted by Ataturk University Faculty of Health Sciences and Distance Education Application and Research Center. HELITAM is a license completion program of two years executed in accordance with memorandum between Ministry of Health and Atatürk University with the aim of enabling medical staffs having graduated from associate degree of Nursing and Health Officer department/program and working in public or private sector to complete their license program. 23.000 students enrolled the program in two years.**

**Courses in HELITAM program are taught through the "distance learning" method which expresses multiple education pathways. The program includes practices sessions at hospitals, face to face assessments and learning materials. Several of course materials were used in this asynchronous learning environment such as videos, e-learning package, course notes and other online resources.**

**This is a success story of a student who studied in HELITAM program below.**

#### **Müzeyyen SOMUNCULAR COLAKOGLU**



**Müzeyyen SOMUNCULAR ÇOLAKOĞLU at her own graduation ceremony in 2011**

**I have never forgotten that amateurs built the Noah's ark and professionals built the Titanic...**

**I was born in Tasköprü village of Sultandagı district in Afyon on 02. 04. 1963. I continued my education life in beautiful cities of my beautiful country.**

**I completed primary and secondary education in Sultandagı Tasköprü village and Health College in Salihli district of Manisa in 1983. I completed my Nursing Associate Degree of Eskisehir, Anadolu University in 1997.**



**Müzeyyen SOMUNCULAR COLAKOĞLU, at the graduation ceremony together with her husband Ibrahim COLAKOĞLU next to her and with her daughter Elif Tugce COLAKOĞLU, son Selçuk Türkalp COLAKOĞLU in 2010**

**I have been working as a nurse in different hospitals since 1983. I have been working as a occupational health and safety nurse in Dr. Lütfi Kırdar Kartal Education and Research Hospital since 1987. I have a 24 year daughter and a 14 year old son.**

**My heart was filled with the excitement of having the opportunity of studying again when I heard that nurses who were graduates of associate degree were granted with the right to be a graduate of license program. When friends said "the right of license is being granted, what we will do now?" I told without hesitation "what a nice event! We will study together" and became of the students who enrolled immediately. I was going to graduate from university a year after my daughter.**

**I was very of myself when I went to enroll in the university with my husband and I was very proud of myself.**

**After enrolling, I thought constantly in ferry that I would start to university again and would be a graduate of license degree. I almost forgot my husband and children while thinking this. Because I was Müzeyyen SOMUNCULAR who cried for three days as her father did not allow to study. Because I was Müzeyyen SOMUNCULAR who could go on**

studying and could enroll in Health College thanks to grandfather who persuaded to her father...

Being able to study again made me feel excited and this excitement was also felt in my family. My son was always trying to encourage me by telling "Mummy, you will a graduate of university".

Although I completed college in a very complicated and story period, I was able to graduate from Health College. When I told to my father "I want to take my chance by taking university exam", his answer was "it is enough, my daughter. I sent you to school, try to get married from now on. After getting married, if your husband allows you to study, you can go on studying". My husband who witnessed my demand and love for studying, have always supported me. In truth, my husband provided me with education opportunities as much as my father. And I cried, cried, cried... I wanted to shout but I was in a ferry. So I couldn't.

I felt like living in a mystify with this excitement. I was able to come back to real life only after the start of academic year. Courses started with the academic year. Being a mother, a nurse and also a student of Ataturk University which is a very long-established university at the same time, was very difficult for me. The fact that women are in working life meant that they had to define some roles in some parts of their life and live according to these roles. I had got used to be a mother and a nurse at the same time. But when a new role was added to these, I started to think that I couldn't bear all of these and decided to drop out with the most radical decision I could make. This wasn't an issue just concerning me. When I lost all my hopes and excitement, my family did not and they always supported me. When I announced my decision to drop out, my son preparing for an exam to go to a good high school called SBS told me that "mummy, please don't leave school. I promise I will do my best to help you to finish school. Please don't "and I decided to go on my way by following his advice.

I started to spare the required time to my courses after my decision to go on university. But course notes were being issued through internet. My biggest supporter in this issue was my son. Because I couldn't use the internet professionally as much as my son. My son did his best to help me and he archived all documents of courses. He explained and helped me to understand subjects which I couldn't understand especially in Biostatistics and I finished the university thanks to him.

I was paying strict attention not only to my courses but also to exams with the support of my family and especially my son. I studies lessons until 04:00 am especially in the final exam period. I don't remember I have studied that much in my life. When I learnt in International Relations and Communication course of Nursing that the age of forty and over is the most difficult period to learn. I focused more on my studies by saying that "Woe to me, I have to succeed this, I shouldn't let people say that Müzeyyen couldn't finish the university".

I finished my first grade thank to my son's endless support and self-sacrifice. After I got over inexperience of first grade, I started to encourage all my friends in direction of studying.

We finished our university in 2009-2010 academic year with a crowded group from our institution. I can say that we had almost any difficulties while studying with distant education.

On the contrary, being able to study our courses when we were at home or available made it easy to go on studying very much. Our university gave the required support to us with telephone and e-mail in all issues we had problems. All of these were unobtainable

**opportunities for us in this age. I am looking forward to the opening of post-graduate program of our university...**

**Endless thanks to**

**My very special ATATURK UNIVERSITY providing me with this opportunity,**

**All ACADEMICIANS giving the opportunity of being a student again,**

**My hospital administrators,**

**My son, daughter and husband...**

**Rest in peace, my GRANDFATHER leading to all of these...**

**Being a student of ATATURK UNIVERSITY is certainly a privilege...**

**First Graduate**

**Charge Nurse Müzeyyen COLAKOGLU**

**Dr. Lütfi Kırdar Kartal Education and Research Hospital**

**Institutional Quality Performance Unit**

**Personnel Safety**

**Some Expressions About int.WOJDE**

**Dear Emine,**

**Thanks for the honor your gave me and congratulations on your first issue. The articles are interesting and will make a good contribution to the field..**

**Marina McISSAC, Emerita Prof. Dr. Aizona State University, 01.04.2012**

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**Dear Emine,**

**Congratulations on starting something soexciting. What a brilliant idea. I feel that the time is ripe for this journal,and I would expect to see lots of good papers submitted in the next few years.Those of us working on women’s education internationally are now networkingmuch better and understanding each others issues and contexts much better. ....these opportunities to share national case studies and international discoursesis better now than it has every been. Distance education tools and methods arealso being adopted more widely. But it is access to a journal like yours that will improve the qualityof this activity. I am very honoured to be asked to beinvolved with the journal, and I hope I can help support the journal.**

**Gill KIRKUP Senior Lecturer in IET  
Walton Hall Milton Keynes, MK 7 6AA, UK. 13.04.2012**

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**Dear Emine**

**..... I am really pleased to see that someone has taken the lead to bring out such a journal, which is long overdue.....**

**Warm regards**

**Professor Asha KANWAR  
President Commonwealth of Learning (COL) 19.06.2012**

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