

EDITORIAL

Quality ODL Provision: Stakeholder Perspectives

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The Discourse

The current issue of *JLAD* and the articles are devoted to the area of stakeholder perception of 'quality'. A major dimension of quality in education and ODL is stakeholder perception, involvement and satisfaction, which eventually facilitates the quality of the graduates and their employability and engagement in the world of work. Quality has generally been perceived to be elusive (in education in general and in ODL in particular), though the literature suggests that its understanding has been multi-faceted, conforming to the standards set for: i) conventional education, ii) fitness for purpose, iii) meeting customers' needs, iv) continuous improvement, and v) compliance with national/regional/international standards and requirements (Jung, 2022). The quality indicators applied to conventional education are generally complied with by the ODL institutions, though there has been diversified perception and application across open universities as seen in a recent examination of their business models (Mishra & Panda, 2025).

A recent analytical study on quality assurance in ODL – the Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Open and Distance Education Programmes (Toprak & Sakar, 2020) – lists ten criteria for ODL programmes: students, educational objectives, programme outcomes, continuous improvement, curriculum, faculty qualification, infrastructure, institutional support and financial resources, and administrative structure, and programme-specific criteria. Quality assurance policies, benchmarks and toolkits for ODL and online/ blended learning are available to institutional leaders and practitioners for reflection and further application (Bates, 2021; COL, 2019; Latchem, 2016; Mishra et al., 2025; Saxena & Panigrahi, 2019). Technology plays a significant role in institutional management, teaching-learning, learner support, professional development, and inclusive education (Panda, 2025) and how AI/GenAI reshapes the entire educational operation including personalised learning, skill development, institutional effectiveness, teacher agency, research and development (OECD, 2026), and learning by students with special education needs (OECD, 2025).

In this context, technology integration and stakeholder engagement for technology-enabled learning at macro, meso, and micro levels strategised by the COL (Mishra & Panda, 2020); the framework of policy-technology-capacity building for managing change in TEL-ODL (Panda & Mishra, 2020), and the framework of preparation-development-maturation on TEL intervention at the institutional level (Sankey & Mishra, 2019) are not only useful to the Commonwealth countries but more so to the developing and underdeveloped nations for institutional transformation through technology.

Large-scale teacher development is still possible with the use of low-cost technology and open-source technologies with significant involvement of various stakeholders including the



government (Ogange et al., 2025). Technology, especially GenAI, also facilitates development of no-cost OER in the specific context of TVET where an array of stakeholders including the employers are involved (Bennet & Okinda, 2015). In this context, while strategic planning has been proved to be essential for short- and medium-term institutional goals, ODL institutions need to go beyond this to more holistic planning for achieving long-term goals by involving all the concerned stakeholders for decision-making and specialised activities and services (Haughey, 2017; Panda, 2008).

Stakeholder perspectives have been studied for: building stakeholders' relations (Chrispen, 2017), e-learning adoption by stakeholders (Ansong et al., 2017), student dropout (Yilmaz & Karatas, 2022), e-learning policy (Makwambeni et al., 2023), a team approach to e-learning in the context of the fourth industrial revolution (Gumbo & Moleka, 2025), and the quality of hybrid learning (Yalan & Marcial, 2025), among others. These stakeholder perspectives may be seen in relation to the findings suggested in the 14 papers included in this issue of the *Journal*.

Papers in this Issue

Based on the brief discourse on the broader theme of 'quality provision in open, distance, digital and blended learning – stakeholders' perspectives', and a brief analysis of research and analysis of papers in this area, in this March 2026 issue of the *JL4D*, we have included 14 peer-reviewed papers and two book reviews under the sub-sections of: invited article, research articles, case studies, reports from the field, and book reviews, dealing with the main theme of this issue "Quality ODL Provision: Stakeholders' Perspectives".

In the peer-reviewed '*Invited Article*' section, Rajabalee and colleagues report the findings of a study on online teaching by secondary school educators during and post-Covid-19. Though there was significant willingness to adopt online teaching-learning, the constraints relating to infrastructure, digital literacy and professional development on the nuances of online design and delivery experienced by the educators could be related to similar experiences in other parts of the globe. The authors suggest a national policy on TEL, technology integration into curriculum design and transaction, and use of a more collaborative and engaging teaching-learning platform as essential to the effectiveness of online and blended education.

We have included six peer-reviewed papers in the '*Research Articles*' section. The papers deal with themes relating to online teaching practice/professional development, self-regulated online learning, use of online platforms by health professionals, attitudes to green technology, perception of digital professional communities by secondary school teachers, and technology-enabled professional development. In the first research paper, Plaatjies and colleagues report that the student-teachers in the context of 'Learning in Practice' (based on 'Work-Integrated Learning') valued and benefited from mentoring-in-practice to develop as professionals, and in the improvement of their practice teaching. Further research could look into how online assessment takes place in such work-integrated contexts of ODL. Ismiyati and colleagues, in the second research paper, report the validation of self-regulated online learning in vocational secondary education, and suggest that more work on especially convergent validity is needed to implement wider use of the scale in Indonesia. Similar studies in other cultures might also be useful to researchers (Zhao et al., 2013). In the third paper, Naciri and colleagues, in a multicentre cross-sectional study on a large sample of higher education students in Morocco, found that that the quality of course content and online learning activities facilitated stronger student motivation and engagement. The authors suggest that curriculum and instructional

designers of distance and blended learning should work out and facilitate student motivation as a significant variable in quality student learning.

In the fourth paper, Joseph and colleagues report the findings of integrating green technology and AI in fostering sustainable business practices. Located in the context of management education in a province in India, the study suggests that the variables of curriculum design, faculty expertise and institutional leadership play a crucial role in sustainability education, and that there should be more AI-driven teaching and training in fostering the eco-friendly innovation capacity of the graduates. In the fifth research paper, from Rwanda, Niyibizi reports the effectiveness of online communities and peer sharing platforms in fostering teacher engagement, collaboration, psychological wellbeing and problem solving; and, based on the constraints faced by the school teachers, the researcher recommends increasing institutional support, technology provision, and teacher capacity building. The sixth research paper by Das and Madhusudan J.V. is devoted to the technology-enabled professional development of teachers; and the findings of the review of research published during 2010-2015 are useful in further reflecting on the utilisation, benefits, constraints and best practices in this area.

We have included six peer-reviewed papers in the '*Case Studies*' section dealing, respectively, with critical Freirean analysis of Artificial Intelligence in technology-mediated learning, integration of GenAI in education, game-based augmented reality for heritage learning, curriculum leadership in the digital era, innovations in blended learning, and student satisfaction with a weekly pedagogic tool. The first case study, by Noel and Liang, on critical reflection on technology and Artificial Intelligence in contexts of technology-mediated learning and distance online learning through a Freirean lens, should generate more critical reflection and debates in this area. The authors caution that while AI can be useful to our curriculum design and teaching-learning, and facilitate access and equity, it should consider agency and humanisation, and strengthen relational forms of learning. In the second case study, Zainal and Jumaat report the usefulness of the Generative AI Integrated Framework for Education (GAIIFE) in fostering integration of GenAI for effective ethical integrity, instructional alignment, and learner centred pedagogy. The authors suggest expanding further research to cover diverse disciplines and delivery modes. Hadjistassou and colleagues in the third case study, from Cyprus, report the effectiveness of a game-based augmented reality application in heritage learning in higher education (i.e., *Chirokoitia Mystery Game*), and the experiences gained in its design and application, should be of significant use to those involved in designing game-based, historically-rooted learning.

In the fourth case study, Lualhati reports the findings of interview-based research on educational leaders on the role of adaptive curriculum leadership in enhancing quality and digital transformation in higher education. Digital literacy, personalised learning and global collaboration were the facilitators of such leadership; and flexibility, inclusivity and responsiveness were identified as practices that can deliver high quality educational programmes. Watuleke and colleagues, in the fifth case study, report adoption of blended learning in higher education in Uganda, and suggest that peer mentorship, interdisciplinarity, and observable student interaction should be given more attention, besides developing an institutional blended learning policy. In the final case study, Prathigadapa and colleagues report the findings of a cross-sectional survey on first-year undergraduate students relating to structured formative assessments in computing education. The results indicate that well-designed formative assessments can address demographic neutrality and facilitate programme-specific pedagogy and technology-enabled learning.

We have included one peer-reviewed paper in the ‘*Report from the Field*’ section. Nantha Subramaniam reports that in a self-managed learning context, AI-powered tools can facilitate immediate, adaptive and context-aware feedback. In this case, the AI-powered tool CodeMentor-AI was found very effective, and the practical experiences of the researcher should be of use to other designers of game-based/AI-based teaching-learning.

In the ‘*Book Reviews*’ section, we have included two important book reviews — one, a Routledge (2025) book on the open universities around the world, reviewed by Jenny Roberts, and the other, an LDA Press (2025) field guide on the future-focused use of EdTech, reviewed by LaKell Archer – should be good reads and useful to our readers.

In Conclusion

We hope that the findings of the invited research paper, other research papers, case studies, field report, and book reviews on diversified themes of ‘stakeholder perspectives on quality in ODL’ and relating to the broader theme of ‘learning for development’, included in this issue of the *Journal*, shall be of interest and use to our readers.

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