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der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg**

Volume 6

Ulrich Bernath and Eugene Rubin (Eds.)

Reflections on Teaching and Learning in an Online Master Program

A Case Study

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Series Editors' Foreword

The Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung (ASF) is a joint unit of the Center for Distance Education and the School of Education at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. It supports research and development in distance education. More specifically, the joint venture was set up to reflect upon the activities undertaken by the Center for Distance Education in the light of relevant international research in distance education and to facilitate the development of programs and courses within the university as well as in a national and international context.

In fulfilling its mission one of the outcomes of the ASF was the creation of the ASF Series in order to publish studies and reports reflecting upon the practices undertaken by the Center for Distance Education. The first publication in 2000 assembled contributions on a university networked program for professional development in dialysis of around 900 nurses, which was one of the larger and remarkably successful projects coordinated by the Center for Distance Education.

In Spring 2000 the online Master of Distance Education (MDE) program - jointly offered by the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) and Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg - was implemented. The realization of this program endowed the ASF Series with a new perspective, namely to provide a series of volumes that directly support specific courses in the program, as well as contributing to the overall scholarship in the field of distance education.

Holmberg and Peters, repeatedly awarded for their life-long contributions in the field of distance education authored volume 4 & 5 of the ASF Series, which became readings in the MDE's *Foundations of Distance Education* course. Currently in preparation are four volumes by Rumble, Beaudoin, Brindley, and Hülsmann that are also designed to serve as readings for students in other MDE program courses.

Volume 6 of the ASF Series - in hand - follows the original goal of the series. It reflects upon the undertakings of the Center for Distance Education. The MDE has become the center's largest endeavor in recent times with more than 500 students joining the program since its inception.

The editors of the ASF Series are grateful to the faculty, staff, and students of the MDE program, who followed the MDE program directors' and the editors' invitation to present a multi-facetted case study with "Reflections on Teaching and Learning in an Online Master Program". We like to express our special gratitude to Christine Walti and Franziska Vondrlik for their tremendous editorial assistance before handing this volume over to the University press.

It is our hope that the many involved in this program as well as the professional community are stimulated by the extraordinary efforts invested in volume number six of our series and enjoy the profusion of reflections.

The Series' Editors

Volume Editors' Foreword

The Master of Distance Education program was launched in January 2000 by the degree granting University of Maryland University College (UMUC) in partnership with Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, which contributes two of the six integrated certificates in the distance education program. The Master's and certificate degree programs are completely accessible online. There were only a few similar programs existing at the time and much of the curriculum needed to be developed as there was no "standard“ program to follow. We felt the program to be both innovative and experimental. On these grounds we were challenged to reflect on what we were to do and at the same time set the standards for a graduate program in distance education.

The publication of this 6th volume of the ASF Series was a particularly challenging one for a number of reasons. It was our intention to do more than merely describe a graduate university program in distance education and, at that, one which is entirely online. We not only want to share the curriculum with our colleagues, but also the process, the critical reflections and indeed the emotional impact of developing and participating in such a project. It was - and still is - an evolving experience and one that we feel others could learn and benefit from. In order to achieve the different levels and goals to which we aspired necessarily meant including the many players involved - the program directors, the faculty and visiting experts, and the students - who all approach the program from different backgrounds, experiences, intentions, and perspectives. Collecting the various aspects and practices of program development for online teaching and learning provides us - those involved - and the distance education community with an extraordinarily rich picture and in this sense we call this work a case study.

The themes include institutional politics, program management, detailed cost analysis, student and faculty support, reflections on online and distance learners and learning behaviors, digital learning spaces, technologies, communication, facilitation, cooperation, and collaboration. Thus, we can also regard our work to be a handbook on issues that necessarily arise and need to be taken into consideration when planning and developing an online program. The multiple perspectives from the thirteen authors from Canada, Germany, Sweden, and the U.S. give each chapter a distinct feel, convey individual world views and often slightly different ways of looking at the same events within a larger framework. The detailed index invites readers to approach the volume from their own perspectives and interests.

We do not present our program as the correct way to do things... it was our way - based on the circumstances and the context along an existing timeline. However, what is unique about this publication is that the practice which has evolved has been extensively deliberated and is rooted in theoretical underpinnings and purposeful research supported by these experiences. It is a program designed and taught by reflective practitioners, who are willing and able to share these insights with their colleagues, students, and with a larger community, and they flow back into the program.

The volume is divided into three parts. In the first part the program directors from the partnering institutions (Bernath and Rubin) describe the historical origins of the Master of Distance Education, outline the basic structure of the program and discuss the organizational and managerial issues that need to be dealt with in the development and early pilot phases of such an endeavor. This sets the stage for the second part where

MDE faculty, visiting experts, and staff (Beaudoin, Brindley, Holmberg, Hülsmann, Peters, Roberts, Zawacki) review the program from various aspects and their experiences. The third part of the volume, the students' perspective (Fox, Offenbartl, Smith, Walti) gives voice to those who are the target audience of the program's efforts to convey and create new knowledge.

The combination of reflective practice and experiencing theory leads to a strengthening of both areas, with the added value of providing substantive knowledge to the community at large.

The more than 500 students who have joined the program since its inception, the array of international faculty and visiting experts, the experiencing of collaborative and differing approaches to a number of issues as well as the possibilities and challenges encountered in the online environment - these are all components in the work accomplished here. With "Reflections on Teaching and Learning in an Online Master Program - A Case Study" we invite the readers to join us in the discussion.

We are very much obliged to all who contributed to this volume.

Ulrich Bernath & Eugene Rubin
Oldenburg & Adelphi, March 2003

List of Contributers

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Ulrich Bernath, Dr., is director of the Center for Distance Education at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. In 1992 he co-founded the EuroStudyCentre Network of EADTU, and in 1995 the German Association for Distance Education (AG-F). Since 1997 he serves as a member of the ICDE World Conferences' international program committee. In 2002 he became an elected member of the steering committee of the EDEN Network of Academics and Professionals (NAP). Bernath has been project manager for program developments in distance education. He published on projects and practices, in particular on organizational and conceptual issues in distance education and open learning. He graduated in Economics in 1970 from Justus-Liebig University of Giessen/ Germany and holds a Ph.D. in Education (Dr. phil.) from the School of Education at Oldenburg University. In 2002 he was appointed adjunct professor by UMUC's Graduate School. *ulrich.bernath@uni-oldenburg.de*

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Börje Holmberg, Ph.D., is emeritus professor of distance-education methodology. He has worked both as a practitioner and a scholar in distance education since 1953, when he wrote his first correspondence course. Originally a linguist, assistant professor of English at the University of Lund in Sweden, he was engaged by Hermods, a large distance-education foundation enrolling some 100 000 students every year, was educational director of this foundation 1956-65 and its director general 1966-75. In the years 1975-1990 he held a chair of distance-education methodology at the FernUniversität in Germany and was director of the Institute for Distance-Education Research at that FernUniversität. After his retirement from there he led the creation of a new distance-education university of applied sciences in Darmstadt and was its founding rector (1995-2001). He has received honorary doctorates from Deakin University and the OUUK. In 1999 he was awarded the ICDE 'Prize for Lifelong Contribution to the Field' together with Otto Peters. Holmberg has directed many research projects, has written several books and a great many articles on distance education. He is still active as a writer and also regularly functions as an online tutor for the Maryland-Oldenburg MDE programme. *boerje.holmberg@strandhusen.se*

Thomas Hülsmann studied at the University of Tübingen and the London School of Economics (LSE) before he obtained his Masters Degree in Mathematics at the University of Bielefeld in 1976. After a decade of teaching mathematics in several African countries, he came to distance education through his experience in developing schoolbooks for mathematics in Madagascar where he worked for the GTZ (German Association for Technical Co-operation) until 1994. He then took a Masters Degree in Education and International Development/Distance Education at the Institute of Education (IOE) in London. 1996 he joined the International Research Foundation (IRFOL) under its director Hilary Perraton to do research on cost-effectiveness of distance education in a number of European countries. Since 1999 he is a member of the academic staff of the Center for Distance Education and a member of the ASF at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. He has taught OMDE 601 several times and has developed OMDE 606, which he regularly teaches with Greville Rumble as visiting expert. Recently Thomas Hülsmann developed two courses (OMDE 625 & 626) for the *Certificate Distance Education in Developing Countries* program. Hülsmann is member of the Editorial Board of 'Distance Education', a leading Journal in the field. *thomas.huelsmann@uni-oldenburg.de*

Susanne Offenbartl, Ph.D., is head of the telemedia learning division within the Hessian Telemedia Technology Competence Center (httc), an association for further education and for multimedia and distance learning at Darmstadt University of Technology. Her main focus is to advise Darmstadt University of Technology on the institutional level to develop towards a dual mode university. She also consults different departments and chairs in the areas of project management, instructional design, and online teaching and has herself designed and taught online courses. Offenbartl studied political science, sociology and philosophy in Munich (Germany) and is a student in the MDE Program since summer 2000. *susanne.offenbartl@httc.de*

Otto Peters is Professor Emeritus at the FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany. He was born in 1926 in Berlin and studied Education, Psychology and Philosophy at the Humboldt University and the Free University in Berlin and earned his doctorate at the University of Tübingen. He has been active in describing and interpreting distance education since 1965, first at the Educational Centre in Berlin, then at the German Institute for Distance

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Acronym Index

ABC, activity based costing, *see costs*
ALN, Asynchronous Learning Network, *see Sloan Consortium*
ASF, Arbeitsstelle Fernstudienforschung; *see Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg*
AT&T, *see American Telegraph and Telephone Company*
CBT, *see computer-based training*
CLT, Center for Teaching and Learning, *see University of Maryland University College*
CMC, *see communication, computer-mediated*
C-RAC, *see Council for Regional Accrediting Commissions*
DE, *see distance education*
DL, *see distance learning*
EADTU, *see European Association of Distance Teaching Universities*
EDEN, *see European Distance Education Network*
EOL, *see Essentials of Online Learning*
FAQ, frequently asked questions
GBP, United Kingdom Pound
GDLN, Global Development Learning Network, *see Worldbank*
HSP III, *see Hochschulsonder-programm (a federal & states government grant program)*
ICDE, *see International Council for Open and Distance Education*
ICT, *see information and communication technology*
IFIS, *see UMUC, Interactive Faculty Information System*
IHEP, *see Institute for Higher Education Policy*
ILS, *see UMUC, Office of Information and Library Services*
IRFOL, *see International Research Foundation for Open Learning*
ISP, Internet Service Provider
MHEC, *see Maryland Higher Education Council*
MOU, *see Memorandum of Understanding*
NEA, *see National Education Association*
ODELL, *see UMUC, Office of Distance Education and Lifelong Learning*
OMDE, Online Master of Distance Education, *see Master of Distance Education program*
OUUK, *see Open University United Kingdom*
PDF, portable document file
SLH, *see student-learning hours*
SME, *see subject-matter expert*
TA, *see teaching assistant*
UMUC, *see University of Maryland University College*
UNIOL, *see Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg*
VS, *see Virtual Seminar for University Faculty and Administrators 'Professional Development in Distance Education'*
WBT, *see web-based training*
WCET, *see Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications*
ZEF/UNIOL, Zentrale Einrichtung Fernstudienzentrum, *see Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Center for Distance Education*

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