

INCARCERATED STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES REGARDING OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Prof Anni Hesselink
Department of Criminology & Security Science
e-mail: hesselae@unisa.ac.za

Prof Kris Pillay
School of Criminal Justice
e-mail: cpillay@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

Open distance learning (ODL) tuition is a reachable, reasonable and convenient method of tertiary education accessible to students wishing to pursue their studies in higher education. In Africa, the University of South Africa (Unisa) is at the forefront of implementing ODL practices and strives to portray the best student-centred, decentralised, flexible, technologically advanced and alternative-option-focused ODL tuition.

In this regard, it is generally expected that all students involved in ODL tuition have the necessary means, access, learning style requirements and personal circumstances to function optimally and excel in an ODL environment. In this research it has been established that a significant portion of Unisa's students are incarcerated and face unique challenges with ODL tuition. Incidentally, Unisa is in line with worldwide ODL practices where technology is replacing the ever-cumbersome 'paper-post' communication and student support efforts and functions.

Hence, Unisa is geared to advance ODL tuition in all spheres online (electronic tuition and availability of study material and additional study information) within the next five years. This paper addresses the **second part** of Unisa's incarcerated students' views, experiences and difficulties regarding ODL tuition. The first part relating to this research endeavour was addressed during the ICERI Conference in Spain (Madrid) during November 2011. An explorative and qualitative analysis gave voice to the 'forgotten' incarcerated student population's challenges regarding ODL.