

# ODL for knowledge development and economic growth in South Africa

Prof Darrell Myrick

e-mail: myricd@unisa.ac.za

## Abstract

Nearly one-third of all publically funded students in South Africa are enrolled in Open and Distance Learning (Pityana 2009:12). In recognition of such high enrolment, whether ODL is having an impact on economic growth is a relevant question. Should ODL be found to contribute minimally to economic growth, the question is: How can ODL be harnessed to have a more significant impact on the national economic growth objective? On the other hand, if it were found that ODL is not having an impact on economic growth, the question becomes: What are the challenges facing ODL, as a mechanism to effect economic growth and development? These questions are most relevant to Unisa, with the institution receiving government support. For the government of the day, the questions are most relevant, considering low economic growth, a high national rate of unemployment and the need to break the cycle of poverty by way of an educated constituency. Knowledge development by way of ODL should become a national priority. This paper aims to unpack the notion of knowledge development through ODL towards an objective of contributing to economic development. The research problem is not ODL itself but rather that it is not viewed as a strategy for economic development. *Capability Approach Theory* (SEN 1985) will be used to determine whether ODL maximises student capabilities and economic development.

**Keywords:** Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Capability Approach Theory, Economic Growth, Economic Development

Distance learning enables one to learn in one's own time, at home or wherever one chooses – reading, watching or listening to material supplied, doing course activities and assignments with regular support from a tutor. Individuals are able to (and do) engage in multivariate natural activities. There is concern for the distribution of opportunities within society. Economic growth is the increase in the amount of the goods and services produced by an economy over time. Economic development refers to the sustained, concerted actions of policymakers and communities that promote the standard of living and economic health of a specific area.

## References

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