

## TRAINING “GREEN SCORPIONS” THROUGH ODL<sup>i</sup> AND MIT<sup>ii</sup>

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*“Each one of us is intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country. Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal”*

- Former president Nelson Mandela, Inaugural Speech, 1994

### **ABSTRACT**

An American-Indian proverb says: *Only when the last tree has been cut down; Only when the last river has been poisoned; Only when the last fish has been caught; only then will you find that money cannot be eaten.* Unfortunately more often than not environmental crimes are crimes of greed. Environmental crimes have serious social, economic and material impacts on the daily lives of people and the continued existence of the world. Harming the environment is a crime just like any other crime. The real problem in South Africa concerning environmental crimes is the enforcement of the laws. In 2008 the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) as it was then known, approached the Department of Environmental Sciences at the University of South Africa (Unisa) to help with the possible training of Environmental Management Inspectors (EMIs), commonly known in the media as “Green Scorpions”. Advanced Short Courses (ASC’s) were developed to teach the EMIs specific skills as required by law. The College of Law was approached to cover

the legal part of the course. The focus of this article will fall on the legal subjects to indicate the importance of legal knowledge for the EMI as well the challenges faced to teach legal concepts to students who have never engaged with the law, through distance learning.

**Keywords:** Environment, distant learning, green scorpion, environmental management inspector, environmental crimes

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<sup>i</sup> Open distance learning defined as “.., a multi-dimensional concept aimed at bridging the time, geographical, economic, social, educational and communication distance between student and institution, student and academics, student and courseware and student and peers. Open distance learning focuses on removing barriers to access learning, flexibility of learning provision, student-centeredness, supporting students and constructing learning programmes with the expectation that students can succeed.” See Unisa’s Open Distance Learning Policy, 2008. This paper was delivered at the ODL workshop for the College of Law 18 – 20 April 2012.

<sup>ii</sup>Multi- inter and trans-disciplinary training.