

## **An enactivist approach to teaching and learning critical reasoning in ODL**

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### **Abstract**

The current social constructivist approach to teaching critical reasoning in distance education at a prominent South African ODL institution is reductionist in the sense that it aims at training learners' intellect to minimise errors and distortions of thought. Within the context of adult education and theories of learning, research indicates that social constructivism fails educational practices. These studies suggest that this is the result of focusing too narrowly on cognitive knowledge. Consequently, a social constructivist approach falls short of reflecting critically on the epistemological, ontological and moral assumptions that underpin its pedagogical framework. However, I argue that, while the impact of socio-cultural realities and political power structures on epistemological paradigms and educational practices cannot be ignored, social constructivism falls short of taking into account embodied everyday experiences that form the vital context within which sense-making takes place. In the light of the above, this article reflects critically on the current pedagogical style underlying the teaching of critical reasoning at Unisa. Following an enactivist approach, I propose a re-conceptualisation of the current critical reasoning teaching paradigm so as to reconsider the question of how we learn things and to understand the process whereby meanings are created not only rationally, but also across multidimensional contexts and complex situations in which learners operate and of which they form an integral part.

**Keywords:** Critical reasoning, open distance learning, objectivism, social constructivism, enactivism, embodied lived experiences