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Distance and E-Learning, Social Justice, and Development: The Relevance of Capability Approaches to the Mission of Open Universities

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Résumé de l'article

This article reviews the discourse of mission in large distance teaching and open universities, in order to analyse the theories of development and social justice that are claimed or may be inherent in them. It is suggested that in a number of cases the claims are unsupported or naive. The article goes on to set out the nature of Amartya Sen's capability approach for development, and to identify its potential for reviewing distance and e-learning more widely as a contributor to development and social justice.

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Abstract

This article reviews the discourse of mission in large distance teaching and open universities, in order to analyse the theories of development and social justice that are claimed or may be inherent in them. It is suggested that in a number of cases the claims are unsupported or naive. The article goes on to set out the nature of Amartya Sen's capability approach for development, and to identify its potential for reviewing distance and e-learning more widely as a contributor to development and social justice.

Keywords: Distance and e-learning; open and distance learning; open universities; distance teaching universities; on-line learning; development; development theory; social justice; Amartya Sen; capability approaches

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Introduction

For many individuals working in the field of distance and e-learning, a significant element in our commitment has been informally or formally to frame programmes of study as interventions to deliver social and economic change, that is some deliberate change in social or economic relationships that shifts the balance of livelihoods and wellbeing in a given context, and in particular to deliver increased equity. This is recorded as the case by a number of those who have occupied leadership positions (see Daniel, 2001; Paul, 1990; Zaki, 1997). This is as true in the richer countries, with their social segmentation and lack of equity in opportunity, not to speak of relative poverty, as in the poorer countries. It is at the same time true that it is not always easy for educators, perhaps in particular at the tertiary level, to see education not as a thing in itself but as a set of activities that delivers outcomes for individuals and societies. But if social change is our goal, this must be so. If educators accept that they have a role as workers in development, we then have to ask ourselves how we understand that process. This article is dedicated to that enquiry.

At institutional level too, many institutions working in the field of open, distance, and e-learning claim development goals within their mission, sometimes with an explicit reference to social justice. This article will review some of those claims, and ask what theories of development are inherently presented, and whether they are adequately theorised to be able to act as more than aspiration or rhetoric. It will seek to present a framework of ideas drawing in particular on the capability approaches proposed by Amartya Sen. The capability approach seeks to deliver freedoms 'to be and to do' *with* participants not *to* subjects of development, and is set out at greater length below. The outcome of discussion is intended to help institutions and individuals in understanding how to plan in distance and e-learning contexts to deliver change through development and contribute to social justice.

Institutional Missions

Below are reproduced a set of extracts from the mission and vision statements or similar texts from the websites of 12 major distance teaching universities (DTUs) around the world. Major distance teaching universities which reproduced purposes only associated with educational rather than social or developmental goals are not included here. Institutions from the regions of North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia are cited.

The selection of texts does not claim to be comprehensively representative but serves as a set of examples. The sampling from institutional mission statements has followed the theme of development, and in terms of validity is closer to the constraints of case study methods that provide illumination of ODL and development in a number of contexts.

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Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan	The Allama Iqbal Open University was established in May, 1974, with the main objectives of providing educational opportunities to masses and to those who cannot leave their homes and jobs. In the last 34 years, the University has more than fulfilled this promise. It has opened up educational opportunities for the working people and has provided access to the females on their door steps. It has also done pioneering work in the field of Mass Education. It is now breaking new grounds in the fields of professional, scientific, and technical education. It is attempting to reach out to the remotest areas of Pakistan. It is also attempting to harness modern information Technology for spreading education in Pakistan. (Allama Iqbal Open University, 2013)
Athabasca University	Athabasca University, Canada's Open University, is dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to and success in university-level study and to increasing equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide. (Athabasca University, 2013)
Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)	The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), established by an Act of Parliament in 1985, has continuously striven to build an inclusive knowledge society through inclusive education. It has tried to increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) by offering high-quality teaching through the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode. (IGNOU, 2013)
National Open University of Nigeria	Mission To be regarded as the foremost University providing highly accessible and enhanced quality education anchored by social justice, equity, equality and national cohesion through a comprehensive reach that transcends all barriers. (National Open University of Nigeria, 2013)
The Open University UK	Mission We promote educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. (Open University, 2013)
Open University of China (was CCRTVU)	The OUC upholds the core values of "Openness, Responsibility, Quality, Diversity and Internationalization". It strives to meet the needs of China's developing society and economy, and to satisfy the personal development needs of the people, particularly the educational needs of rural areas, remote areas and ethnic minority regions. The OUC shoulders its social responsibility and promotes education equality by providing flexible and diversified educational services that deliver quality educational resources. (Open University of China, 2013)
Open University of Malaysia	Adopting the motto 'University for all', OUM believes in the democratisation of education; giving everyone a chance at self-actualisation and fulfilling their potential. (Open University of Malaysia, 2013)

Open University of Tanzania	Vision To continuously provide quality open and distance education, research and public services for sustainable and equitable socio-economic development of Tanzania in particular and rest of Africa. (Open University of Tanzania, 2013)
Wawasan Open University (Malaysia)	Established in 2006, it uses flexible approaches to make higher education accessible to all – anytime, anywhere – and to create a lifelong learning community for aspiring individuals regardless of their previous educational, ethnic or socio-economic background. (Wawasan Open University, 2013)
Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED, Spain)	Since 1972, UNED has sought to translate into action the principle of equal opportunity in access to higher education through a methodology based on the principles of distance learning and focused on the needs of the student. (UNED, 2013)
University of Phoenix	University of Phoenix provides access to higher education opportunities that enable students to develop knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their professional goals, improve the productivity of their organizations and provide leadership and service to their communities. (University of Phoenix, 2013)
University of South Africa (UNISA)	Vision Social justice and fairness: Inspired by the foundational precepts of our transforming society, social justice and fairness animate our strategy, guide our efforts and influence our imagined future. (UNISA, 2013)

Analysis of Open and Distance Teaching University Missions

It can be noted that seven universities claim equity and equality of opportunity as goals: Athabasca, NOUN of Nigeria, Open University UK, Open University China, Open University Tanzania, UNED Spain, and UNISA South Africa. IGNOU also talks of an 'inclusive knowledge society', while Phoenix and Wawasan highlight making higher education accessible. Allama Iqbal OU of Pakistan prioritizes inclusion for women and remote communities. OU China also identifies the rural and remote communities, along with ethnic minorities as priorities for inclusion. Wawasan of Malaysia also mentions as a priority inclusion on an ethnic basis. OU Tanzania alone explicitly identifies sustainable development as a goal. OU Malaysia highlights 'democratization of education' as a priority. National and nation building goals are identified such as 'an inclusive knowledge society' (IGNOU); 'national cohesion' (NOUN); 'China's developing society' (OU China); 'the socio-economic development of Tanzania' (OUT); and UNISA proposes to contribute to 'our transforming society'. Scale of opportunity is mentioned

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by AIOU Pakistan ('mass education') and by IGNOU India with its commitment to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio. The opportunities for learners are explicitly mentioned by Athabasca of Canada; OU UK which talks of 'all who wish to realise their ambitions'; OU Malaysia which aims to 'give everyone a chance at self-actualisation'; University of Phoenix which promotes access to higher education in particular for professional and vocational outcomes; and Wawasan Malaysia who welcome 'aspiring individuals'. Three universities use the term 'social justice', that is, NOUN of Nigeria, Open University UK, and UNISA of South Africa.

We should not assume that because a priority is not mentioned in the particular text highlighted here it is not mentioned elsewhere by a university; nor should it be assumed that institutions not mentioned may not have similar or indeed differing priorities. Nor lastly can it be assumed that priorities of development highlighted in institutional statements are always carried through with programmes of activity, and are evaluated against their mission goals, although of course in well-led and managed institutions this will be the case. We should also note the distinction between the ODL mission contributing to equity in educational provision, for example, making higher education more accessible to all, and those that contribute to equity more widely in society through education. In the latter category we have the OU China and UNISA, as expressed through their mission statements. This raises for consideration the scope of a university's ambitions for development in a social and political context.

The major point however is to indicate that in a relatively cursory examination what major distance teaching universities in a range of geographies and economies, both 'developed' and 'developing', say about themselves is deeply embedded in development discourse and the politics of social change. Open universities cited here positively associate distance and e-learning with their delivery of goals of development defined in such ways. In summary most of these universities do not accept the current availability of opportunity as either fair or adequate, and intend through their activities to change it.

The range of approaches developed by the DTUs and other universities with substantial deployment of distance and e-learning is at core about the affordances that are delivered through the separation of time and space, and through the use of technologies to innovate in both pedagogy and logistics. These affordances above all deliver flexibility regarding time and place that permits study alongside work and family; includes people in geographies that would otherwise be excluded; supports the inclusion of women where independent movement to study on a campus is restricted, and of the house bound, the disabled, and the imprisoned for whom study on the campus is not possible; it can permit study by individuals otherwise excluded by cost where distance and e-learning has been able to lower cost as against other educational systems; and through scale can provide opportunities for far more people than would otherwise be possible. More generally, through scale and flexibility it can in terms of social policy provide a pressure valve to release frustration about educational opportunity; can

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deliver large scale opportunities for professional development that support improvement in quality of service and economic growth; and can support the development of an educated citizenry and so nourish self-fulfillment and democracy.

Theories of Development

How might this combination of the aspirations of and affordances available to the open and distance–teaching universities contribute to development? Development starts, as observed above, from a fundamentally non-conservative position, to the effect that society is not as it should be and change for the better can and should be planned for and delivered. Distance teaching universities, whether single-mode or blended in their modes of study, by virtue of their ambition for and potential scale of contribution to development are therefore political actors (Tait, 1989, 1994, 2008). Given the centrality of that framework of ideas in the cited extracts from statements of mission and so on of the DTUs above we might expect, even in these fragments of text, to find some evidence of understanding about how development is understood. However there is very little clue. The span of understanding ranges from human capital theory, to inclusion of the excluded, and in some cases to the explicit if unsupported use of the term social justice. The University of Phoenix, a substantial on-line as well as blended study for–profit university, does not state any larger social vision for change, and limits itself to supporting student advancement in the workplace. As an institution it would appear that it could without difficulty work within current social and economic structures, which is starkly in contrast with the other mission statements and related texts from the open and distance teaching universities. We thus have, as earlier noted, across a range of university missions those who have explicit goals for achieving wider equity in society, through those who aim primarily to achieve wider access to education, to those who have no explicit commitment to equity. This is of course likely to be true across universities as a whole not only those which are founded on open and distance learning approaches.

The range of theories of development available for consideration is broad. It includes understandings of the world that progress is built primarily on economic growth and that poorer countries should become like richer countries, to a scepticism or hostility to the sustainability of economic growth as an uncontested good. While in most cases education is seen as an essential contributor to the human capital that countries need to grow economically and socially, there is a counter view that education especially at tertiary level provides legitimacy for a filter for the labour market as much as it provides real skill and knowledge essential for employment (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Development is in other words a contested concept, and a university that commits itself to development needs to have a position articulated and adopted.

Within that range of possibilities for the meaning of development, the most dominant set of ideas over the last 20 years or so, especially for international governmental organizations, has been the human development model pioneered by UNDP through its

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annual World Development Reports. These began in 1990 with the celebrated but at the time challenging statement 'People are the real wealth of a nation' (UNDP, 2010, p. 1), which lay in contrast with the World Bank approach to development at that time of GDP growth being the simple goal and measure for development (The Economist, cited in UNDP, 2010, p. 14). While Mahbub Ul Haq was the progenitor of this new approach in the UNDP, including the idea that the capacity to make choices was core to a framework for development, his partner at the time in this rethinking was Amartya Sen whose work developed under the title of capability approaches has subsequently become dominant. In brief, development activity should seek to support capabilities in people 'to be and to do'. The approach has an existential commitment to human freedom to choose those capabilities, constrained as those freedoms may be by context. Capabilities are supported by sets of skills and activities, known in Sen's terminology as 'functionings'. The skill of reading may for example support the capability for an individual to be the person she or he wants, and to gain a livelihood in a more fulfilling and materially rewarding way. This approach to development has been very influential in international governmental organisations charged on behalf of their governments with development goals over the last 20 or more years. It is therefore this set of ideas, and their relevance for ODL and the purposes of ODL-focused institutions and organizations, that I want to explore in the remainder of this paper.

Development, Social Justice, and Open and Distance Learning

Three DTUs frame their mission or vision explicitly in terms of social justice, as noted above. What might they mean by that? The roots are both religious and secular, with the notion developed through the French Revolution from whence we hold the notion of universal human rights, but used also over a long period by the Roman Catholic Church in its positive option for the poor (Tait & O'Rourke, 2013). At core is a commitment to equality of human beings, the development of programmes of activity to deliver inclusion of the great majority in the benefits of society, and solidarity with those in need. It is easy to see how an intention to include the excluded, and to support those who have been denied opportunity, would develop as the missions of open universities and DTUs and that the term social justice could be used to frame such missions.

However there is no worked out and articulated framework of understanding as to what a development framework for ODL might look like. Earlier works such as Rogers on adult learning more broadly assert the need for such a framework in richer as well as poorer countries, and evaluate the range of development ideas available. Many of the questions raised remain relevant for ODL, in particular the critique of human resource development as making objects of 'target groups' rather than subjects of development (Rogers, 1990). More specifically for ODL, Wall in writing about distance education with indigenous people in the North of Canada asserts the importance of partnerships, working with communities, and this is further emphasized by Haughey in the same volume (Haughey, 1990, p. 35).

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UNESCO in its policy document on open and distance learning (ODL) explicitly linked its importance for the achievement of the right to education for all , and emphasized the significance for development of ODL's deployment of technologies for learning in educational contexts (UNESCO, 2002, pp. 13-19). Perraton makes an extended and sceptical examination of the claims of ODL to contribute to development in the South, and identifies the high incidence of non-completion as a major stumbling block to the recognition of those claims (2000). Perraton also identifies four factors as driving the expansion of ODL: increasing access, economic development, technology, and cost-saving (2004, pp. 18-22). Reza asks still pertinent questions about how the impact of ODL can be assessed in terms of personal, social, and economic measures, and laments the absence of adequate data. She nonetheless concludes that there are benefits to its target audience but that future policy in this area must be informed by further research (2004, p. 221).

Rumble has focused in the context of ODL on one aspect of social justice, namely the contribution ODL can make through the provision of education at prices affordable to the poor through redistributive taxation (2007). Such an argument, and its accompanying polemic against neo-liberal approaches to society in general and education in particular, would, if applied, at least arguably contribute to access to education, a necessary condition for social justice to be delivered. Outside continental Europe however that argument is not followed at least at tertiary education level, and indeed in England has recently been comprehensively dismissed by recent fees and funding policy for higher education, where university education has been positioned as a private not a public good. Kirkpatrick argued that ODL is central to delivery of the Millenium Development Goals, and in particular draws attention to the scale of impact on teacher education in African contexts (2008, pp. 26-28). Harreveld reviews teacher education in developing contexts and critically assesses Sen's capability approach for in-service education of teachers as a means to support their freedom as 21st century knowledge workers (2007, pp. 51-53).

While the promotion of access within a framework of economic development is a necessary condition for any contribution to social justice to come from ODL, nowhere is there proposed a theoretical and substantive understanding of what development is, or how it works, nor do such accounts lead to a comprehensive account of what should be done in terms of curriculum and pedagogy to support such aims. To support that higher level aim, Tait and O'Rourke have developed a framework for assessing the extent to which an ODL institution is able to contribute to social justice in order to support the delivery of concrete outcomes rather than undefined aspirations. Sen's capability approach however provides an overarching framework of understanding of development that can support the aspiration to serve social justice and ensure the orientation of policy and practice to ensure delivery.

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Capability Approaches and Education

Education, primarily adult literacy and school enrolment, was included, along with life expectancy and GDP per capita, to create a more complex set of measures than just GDP with which to assess development in the first UNDP annual report to address the issue in 1990 (Saito, p. 22). This new set of measures was known as the Human Development Index (HDI). Education has thus been part of the overall framework of ideas which became the capability approach from the beginning, along with the notion of freedom to make choices.

It has however taken longer than expected for the ideas of the capability approach to make their way as an explanatory framework into education and in particular into the tertiary and higher education sectors. Saito summarizes Sen's view on the contribution that education can and should make to human capability:

> The human capital received from education can be conceived in terms of commodity production. However Sen argues that education plays a role not only in accumulating human capital but also in broadening human capability. This can be through a person benefiting from education 'in reading, communicating, arguing, in being able to choose in a more informed way, in being taken seriously by others and so on. (2003, p. 24)

Saito points out also that education may not necessarily improve capabilities, as some kinds of education may even reduce them (rote learning, for example). While her comments relate to children and compulsory education they are highly relevant to tertiary and ODL approaches:

> It seems appropriate to argue that education which plays a role in expanding a child's capabilities should be a kind of education that makes people autonomous. (2003, p. 28)

Discussion of the capability approach contribution to understanding the role of education in development has continued to be discussed in the schools sector. With a focus on inclusion and equity, Walker has written that "Inequalities of gender, race and disability are included in and fundamental to the space of functionings and capabilities" (2006, p. 166), to which we should also surely add socio-economic class as a powerful distributor of opportunity. Walker adds elsewhere

> If schools and universities are places where identities are formed, where we learn to be as well as to know, how

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> much greater the responsibility for teachers to act and to think about what identities and what capabilities to function are being distributed. (2005, p. 109)

Walker's investigation of what is important to girls in school in South Africa leads her to conclude that we "have three provisional education capabilities: personal autonomy, paid work and social relations" (2006, p. 169). Walker goes on to generate a list through interviews of capabilities wanted by the girls of autonomy; knowledge (with caution re: the Freirian notion of 'banking of knowledge' and a positive emphasis on critical thinking); social relations; respect and recognition; aspiration; voice; bodily integrity and bodily health; and emotional integrity and emotions (2006, pp. 179-180). What Walker has done for schools here is to develop, using the capability approach, answers to the question "How will schools enhance the possibilities for its girl students to be and to do, and to have freedom to do so?". It is worth noting that Walker has developed this approach in a particular context for a particular group, as Sen had intended (he gave no overall definition of what capabilities should be). This is different from Nussbaum's position that such a list could be developed universally (see Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 33-34 and Tait & O'Rourke, 2013, for discussion of this). Walker's work leads to the question as to how institutions such as open universities and DTUs should develop an understanding of the ways in which they hope to build the capabilities of their students, deploying their particular approaches to learning and teaching, and in the particular contexts in which they work.

The use of the capability approaches framework in the tertiary sector has been slim, but Watts and Bridges (2006) have analyzed the discourse of access to higher education. They have critiqued the top-down nature of such policies in England, valuable though the goal may in general be to increase the study at university of a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds, on the grounds that the benefits are assumed rather than deriving from the young adults whom such policies are designed to serve. The Senian notion of freedom to choose is thus ignored. This may serve to explain the limited success that a decade of such Widening Participation policies and accompanying funds have had over the last decade in England in shifting the proportion of entrants to higher education from poorer socio-economic groups (Shepherd, 2011).

Capability Approaches and Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

The Commonwealth of Learning, which focuses its mission on the contribution that innovation in learning and in particular ODL can make to development, is the first institution to propose the use of capability approaches in the ODL field. COL sets out its position clearly on both how development is to be framed and how education for development is to be understood.

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The organisation's *Three Year Plan 2012-15* states that

> Following the ideas of development economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, COL understands development as freedom. Increasing the freedoms that men and women enjoy is a definition of development, and greater freedom empowers people to be more effective agents of development. (2012, p. 9)

It can be inferred that it is the framework of learning for development, rather than innovation in learning per se, that has over the last decade brought for COL the explicit use of the dominant framework for development of the capability approach.

To bring the capability approach into more focus for ODL, we would need as Walker did for girls in schools in South Africa, to work with students to identify how ODL approaches could help them deploy freedom to choose to be and do. It is proposed therefore that a concern for social justice as expressed through mission statements of open and distance teaching universities must be supported by clearer thinking about what that means and how it is to be delivered, and further that the capability approach provides a very powerful account of what it might be that these universities are trying to provide equity for, that is, the capabilities of their successful students to be more free 'to be and to do', supported by the functionings that they develop through study.

Building on the social justice audit approach proposed by Tait and O'Rourke (2013), the following schematic approach could at this stage be developed.

Access and Recruitment

There is a crucial difference between policies of access and recruitment and what is conventionally understood as marketing. For development purposes within a framework of the capability approach an institution will need to identify which socio-economic groups have been historically excluded. Thus there is a positive bias to recruit not only from those who are eager to take advantage of opportunity, but those for whom it may be culturally and socially unfamiliar and challenging. This makes access and recruitment a qualitatively different activity from 'identifying the market' in a more familiar commercial sense. This is not to say that the latter may not be an essential part of the portfolio of recruitment activity in order to ensure institutional viability, but it is not adequate on its own if the institutional mission adopts the discourse of development and inclusion, as we have seen many open and distance teaching universities do. The balance between commercial marketing and access for development purposes will need to be judged according to resources and contexts, but should not in good faith be a tiny fig leaf for an overall commercial approach to significant intervention in the current structures of societal opportunity and disadvantage. Bringing the two discourses of

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marketing and development together is a crucial task for open and distance teaching universities.

Equally, following the cautionary outcome of work by Watts and Bridges (2006), the Senian perspective demands for the target groups for recruitment to open and distance teaching universities not the status of children for whom good is determined by adults, but a framework of understanding that explains clearly what support to livelihood and identity formation study can bring, and which seeks to ensure that potential students make their own choice and are enhanced in making the choice (their capacity to be free to choose). Thus right at the start of a discussion of the contribution that capability approaches can make to ODL we see a clear move away from top-down 'welfarism', perhaps more dominant at the time of the foundation of many open and distance–teaching universities, at the same time as there is a refusal to accept current social structures, or neo-liberal approaches to markets alone, as determinants of social outcomes.

Programmes of Study

The programmes of study that are adopted by an open university represent significant strategic choices as to the most effective way to deliver on its development aims. This creates a qualitatively different rationale for curriculum strategy than the inheritance of classic disciplines or indeed the primacy of academic choice or preference. This can bring significant tension with the traditional understanding of many academics as to how university curriculum should be constructed and their rights within that process. With the adoption of the capability approach as an overarching framework an institution has to ask itself explicit questions as to how it will help students exercise their freedom 'to be and to do'. Thus programmes of study need to be adopted and developed that will empower successful students to make choices about the sort of person they aspire to be, and the ways in which they gain livelihoods. In other words programmes of study need to centre themselves on outcomes for students.   These choices derive from students present and future, supported but not supplanted by the academic and professional skills in the university.

This represents particular challenges for open and distance teaching universities where curriculum production takes place all too often not with students but for students on a campus where students are for the most part absent. Curriculum innovators thus have a subtle and complex task to negotiate the interests of students, the academic community, and externally society and government, in order to create programmes of study that acknowledge the centrality of outcome of students' freedom to choose. This is particularly true where the status of future students within a set of power relations is not strong, nor is the professional understanding in the context of university study necessarily one of equals. Nonetheless, this tension of power relations in development contexts is near universal, and university education cannot claim any exceptionality.

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Learning, Teaching, and Student Support

While learning, teaching, and student support have core roles in delivering the learning outcomes of programmes of study and supporting the success of students, the capability approach provides us with a higher level framework for understanding how we should construct and direct learning, teaching, and student support strategies for open universities. If freedom to choose to be and to do represent the desirable outcomes for students, we can then review the strategies to support independent learning, the pedagogies that underpin assessment, and completion, in that light. The range of needs of a heterogeneous student body also argues for flexibility rather than uniformity in supporting students, which at the same time brings challenges for the notion of equity. Very important are the strategies to support student completion, as open and distance teaching universities are prone to publicize their recruitment figures and not their student completion data (Simpson, 2010).

Conclusion

At a time of increasing commercialization and commoditization of higher education there is a need to protect the development character of higher education institutions and in particular open and distance teaching universities. It is hoped that this article will gain agreement on the need to revisit the goals of these universities and other higher education institutions insofar as they claim development outcomes, in ways that make clearer what kind of development is understood to be in operation. Central to this must be the rethinking, updating, and clarification of what lies behind the sorts of mission statements identified earlier, and the framing of core activities of recruitment, programme development, and teaching, learning, and student support in explicit ways that support them.

The nature of this work is specific and particular to institution and context. It is hoped that this article will stimulate such further work, and also that such work makes its way back through publication and in turn develops our understanding further. However we might in advance of detailed work at each institution make a proposition that identifies the capabilities that successful students will need in order to exercise freedom as fully as possible. It is suggested that central to the Senian perspective for higher education would be

- the capability to exercise independence of thought in order to build towards autonomy and self-fulfillment,
- the capability to gain a livelihood that aligns as far as possible with the first bullet point,
- the capability to operate as fully and equitably as possible as a citizen.

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It would be possible at institutional level to begin such a review as is proposed here by examining recruitment, programmes of study, and teaching, learning, and student support strategies against these three desired dimensions of human capacity. In such a way we can be more confident that our stated aims of development and social change are integrated with the overall institutional operation and that we can mitigate the risk of institutions operating at a level of rhetoric only.

Acknowledgements

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