

PCF5 SUB-THEME: GOVERNANCE, CONFLICT and SOCIAL JUSTICE

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POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

ID 69 – DR DE BEER

HANDOUT:

Community needs for cooperative peacekeeping training with Open and Distance E-Learning (ODEL) modes and Open Education Resources (OER) in Africa

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ABSTRACT

One reason why peacekeeping training for African militia does not always bear fruit may be the ignorance of laymen, civil servants, educators and community leaders. In order to address this problem, greater community awareness is necessary. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) could become a peacemaker in integrating peacekeeping training in civil education programmes via Open and Distance E-Learning (ODEL) in collaboration with the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE), the National Association for Distance and Open Learning of South Africa (NADEOSA) and the Southern African Regional University Association (SARUA). A substructure of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is currently promoting the use of Open Education Resources (OER), also referred to in ODEL as Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS). COL and UNESCO provide a neutral platform for academics worldwide to engage in African affairs, especially in sensitive conflict regions where children and women suffer the consequences of various forms of military conflict. The challenge for the academe is determining whether peacekeeping skills training has any impact in curbing the violence spiral. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in Geneva has initiated a series of Peacekeeping Operations Correspondence Instruction (POCI) courses specifically for capacity building within global military institutions, civil police forces and intelligence communities and for diplomats and academics engaged in strategic studies. These courses can be downloaded free of charge from *E-Learning for African Peacekeepers* (ELAP) (<http://www.elap.unitarpoci.org>). Likewise the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (PPC), based in Nova Scotia, Canada, offers a programme focusing on training those serving in conflict zones, including civilians, military personnel and police officers (<http://www.peaceoperations.org/web/la/en/default.asp>). Within this context the relationship between the major themes and subsequent crosscutting aspects for the 5th Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF5) are discussed under ‘Governance, Conflict and Social Justice’ with particular emphasis on the application of ODEL methodologies.

1. REVIEW

The 5th Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF5) reviewers referred to our research into the sub-theme 'Governance, Conflict and Social Justice' with emphasis on open and distance learning (PCF 2008). The reviewers also referred to the work of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (PPC) in Canada, which consulted nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and military commanders, for example, regarding their roles in post-conflict situations, stating that: "A discussion of the motivation for developing such a course and the outcomes would be interesting" (PCF 2008).

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

An absence of civil education could largely be to blame for the perpetual conflicts in Africa (Cf. CNBC Africa 2008). Even government officials may be the by-products of political illiteracy. In our opinion school teachers, university lecturers, civil servants, diplomats, intelligence staff and especially soldiers and civil police officers are generally ignorant about the human rights formulated in the United Nations (UN) charter and international law (Cf. UFS 2008).

The following aspects are implied:

- Suffering of women and children;
- Health and wellbeing of civilians;
- Peacekeeping community training in managing conflict for social justice through cooperative education via Open and Distance E-Learning (ODEL) modes and with Open Education Resources (OER);
- Preserving the peace in post-conflict zones; and
- Transforming offensive soldiers into uniformed diplomats.

Appropriate distance education generations are first (correspondence), second (dual face-to-face) and third (educational technology) methodologies for a proposed instructional model. This is an action research project (De Montfort 2007) for integrating ODEL and OER with Africanised practices in collaboration with global partners and ex-militia to enhance and preserve peace (Cf. PPC 2008; UNITAR POCI 2008). Two imminent research questions emerge:

- How should ODEL practitioners establish awareness of peacekeeping training through political literacy (read "civil education" hereinafter); and
- What are the outcomes?

3. GOVERNANCE, CONFLICT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

United Nations (UN) structures are currently promoting peacekeeping and enhancing social development via higher education institutions (HEIs) in Africa to educate cooperative communities, by means of ODEL and OER practices, to understand, appreciate and sustain a just and fair civil society (Cf. De Beer & Thulare 2001). Unfortunately, cooperation cannot be taken for granted in communities in conflict (Cf. UFS 2008). One of the problems is the misinterpretation of a true democratic government. Another issue is "whether traditional African societies are in essence community orientated and if so, what place the individual has in such a collectivist perspective" (Higgs 2007).

3.1 Governance

Normative forms of governments in Africa are considerably virulent. In analysing human rights and freedom of speech within a differentiated civilised social order, state philosophical and constitutional approaches of political scientists are generally to test whether the relationship and community structures and social figurants are intact within the differentiated powers of the Trias Politica. That implies the differentiation of powers of the state into law-giving, administration, and judicial functions. Transgression of the aforementioned sub-variant authoritarian boundaries

(or the Rule of Law) creates quasi-democracies and de facto governments in many African states. Duvenhage (1998) defines the crisis of such nation states as the absence of a political culture where knowledge is not imparted.

It is important to differentiate among the array of Africa's ethnic cultures. Ethnicity – "ethnos" according to its Greek concept – entails more than race. It means, amongst other things, to have dominion over a specific life sphere. Political scientists differentiate several life spheres to define a democratic society. Consequently, civil education ODEL programmes, which include peacekeeping modules, could also be developed as a specific sphere to assist educators. Free education curricula could subsequently be extended to post-conflict areas (Cf. COL 2007).

3.2 Conflict

During a workshop Conolly (2007) stated that most conflicts on the African continent are caused by "ethnostress" – a term coined by Hill (1992) to label the confusion and disruption of the "aboriginal spirit ("stress") as rooted in individual experiences of aboriginal identity ("ethnicity") in modern-day communities. According to Hill (1992), "Living within native communities, is a very stressful experience".

Researchers recognise that specific "hurting" behaviours are associated with feelings of fear and anger. When people suffer mental confusion and physical and emotional pain, it causes feelings of hopelessness (Hill 1992).

To counteract this feeling of hopelessness, new-generation DE modes could be used to educate the masses. Free satellite broadcasts, decoders and satellite dishes, open education radio stations, DVDs, memory sticks, ipods, mp3 players and correspondence-based materials could assist the academe to orientate communities in respect of ethnic differences and enhance a culture of tolerance – also in the aftermath of civil wars.

3.3 Social justice

HEIs are co-responsible for educating people about ethics. Morality is learned within families, communities, schools, associations and public organisations. According to Lenn (2002) these are "the crucibles in which individuals make choices, where they take cues from others about what is right and wrong, good and bad, appropriate and inappropriate". OER courses such as UNITAR POCI (United Nations Institute for Training and Research: Programme of Correspondence Instruction) and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (PPC) could assist in transforming communities in conflict into communities of social justice.

Hill (1992) *inter alia* prioritises the so-called "frozen needs":

- To feel secure, safe and at peace;
- To know that one's existence is beneficial; and
- To love, live and let live.

It is unimaginable that victims of perpetual conflict could develop to their full human potential; neither can they exercise their democratic rights, nor experience the international principles of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

4. ODEL, OER AND COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

ODEL is the fastest way of counteracting illiteracy in Africa. An example is the Open Learning Systems Education Trust (OLSET), which uses radio broadcasts (Cf. OLSET 2006). Many other learning programmers use free satellite channels. This is becoming a highly practical way of curbing the ignorance of ordinary civilians who often fall prone to the warlords of Africa. Another reason why conflicts flare up again after peace settlements is a lack of knowledge.

What, then, are the best means of educating both laymen and official peacekeepers? As stated earlier, peacekeeping modules could be integrated with civil education in primary and secondary schools, while programmes for HEI sessions could be extended into community education such as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). Communities could be made more aware of international goodwill instead of simply distrusting foreign military personnel under the UN flag. Ignorance often hampers settlements. The idea is to establish a 'needs-driven modality' with military intelligence to sustain a peaceful society throughout the process.

How, then, should practitioners enhance civil/peacekeeping programmes?

The answer is to regard peacekeeping as a skills training process in:

- Developing free education curricula; with
- Cooperative education; and
- ODEL methodologies; as well as
- Academic accreditation.

Developing free education curricula

In an online discussion of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Susan D'Antoni proposes a grid with a classification policy for responses. The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) researched the term OER, which refers to "web-based materials, offered freely and openly for use and reuse in teaching, learning and research" (UNESCO 2007). Intellectual property rights linked to OER are *inter alia*:

- Balancing openness and intellectual property;
- Equal distribution;
- Open access;
- Quality;
- Adjusting new resources;
- Copyright or under Creative Commons (2008).

Government representatives in the Association for African Universities (AAU) favour their idea of Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS) initiatives for OER (Tucker 2007). Likewise, UNESCO, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the AAU and its African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) are constantly promoting ODEL development in Africa. Peacekeeping is also very pertinent in their agendas (Cf. AAU 2005).

4.2 Cooperative Education (Co-op)

Co-op is a philosophy of learning that promotes learning based on cooperation between HEIs, industry, commerce and the public sector (SASCE 2004). Certain types of co-ops lend themselves to peacekeeping instruction, e.g.:

- Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) / army, police, intelligence agencies;
- Experiential Learning / students in strategic studies;
- Work-based Learning / correctional services;
- Internship / diplomatic corps;
- Learnerships / HEIs;
- Research Collaboration / ex-militia;
- Staff Development / navy, air force;
- Exchange Programmes / co-op learners;
- Partnerships / government departments / security companies;
- Community Outreach / ABET; and
- Lifelong Learning / peacekeepers in post-conflict zones.

Our university has taken the initiative to register the modules of UNITAR POCI according to the required unit standards for higher education accreditation. Workplace learning is structured, planned, monitored and assessed for National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels and to ensure integration of the whole qualification with curriculum outcomes (De Montfort 2007).

Service learning could be specifically applied to:

- Engendering civic responsibility in peacekeeping;
- Developing peacekeeping skills and awareness of personal, social and cultural values and respect; and
- Engaging in peacekeeping activities where both the community and the militia are primary beneficiaries.

4.3 ODEL methodologies

Morrow and Nonyongo (2003) state that ODEL has become the global “mode of delivery” in the formal and non-formal teaching and learning modes of HEIs. ODEL practitioners develop strategies for delivery at an affordable cost by integrating various learning resources into a flexible pattern for training and learning. This concept was also used to construct the National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa, since it focuses on the specific needs of communities in multiple learning and training areas (Morrow 1996:4).

Comparatively, UNITAR POCI modules are geared towards:

- Enhancing access for learners (Cf. Anderson 2006);
- Using co-ops for employability;
- Supporting social development;
- Emphasising learner centeredness;
- Lifelong learning to link with globalisation;
- Flexibility for the individual needs of learners (Cf. ELAP 2008); and
- Andragogical accessibility to higher expertise.

An important aspect is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for those students who have acquired other career experiences. Consequently ex-militia members are often co-authors of peacekeeping modules (Cf. PPC 2008; UNITAR POCI 2008).

4.4 South African accreditation efforts

Lt Col P.J. de Montfort of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has since 2004 been busy with the administrative process of securing accreditation for UNITAR POCI modules by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). His aim is to integrate training modules for militia and diplomats and to prioritise these as part of the possible school curricula in civil education and political literacy inductions at HEIs. After accreditation, all learners should be able to generate academic credits for further skills training in Peace Support Operations (PSO). De Montfort also strives to enhance awareness of international initiatives and the implementation of skills in post-conflict zones.

Currently there is no higher learning programme on generic PSO offered by any university in Southern Africa. To fill this hiatus, De Montfort submitted the unit standards for accreditation to SAQA, while his second active research cycle is to write a comprehensive Instructional Systems Design (ISD) report and curriculum and to adapt the learner guides accordingly.

5. INTROSPECTION

Now, “What are the outcomes of distance peacekeeping instruction?”

The director of UNITAR POCI, Prof. H.J. Langholtz (2008), responds: "There is no simple answer. But it makes for some very interesting analysis and discussion. To really answer the question – Does completion of a UNITAR POCI course make a better peacekeeper? – we would first need to be able to measure effectiveness as a peacekeeper. And to really do a scientific study of the effectiveness of POCI training, we would need to do an experiment with the proper rigorous experimental design. One design would be to randomly assign soldiers to two groups, and then have one group study UNITAR POCI courses while the other did not. Then, deploy these two groups in a peacekeeping setting, measure their effectiveness, and do a statistical analysis that compared their effectiveness. If the POCI-trained group performs differently at a statistically significant level from the non-POCI-trained group, then this would demonstrate that the training made a difference. Of course, this clearly delineated scientific approach is not feasible. We don't really have a scientific way of measuring effectiveness as a peacekeeper."

However, Langholtz (2008) confirms, "Each UNITAR POCI course contains a 50-question end-of-course examination. We maintain item banks of 100 questions for each of our 21 courses and we randomly draw 50 questions for each student's unique end-of-course exam. In order to pass and earn the Certificate of Completion, students must score 75%, and of course this is easily quantified, observed and measured. So in that sense, yes, it is possible to measure the effectiveness of completion of a UNITAR POCI course. If a student is able to pass the exam it is a safe assumption that they understand the material of the course better than a student who fails the exam. So in answer to the question – Does peacekeeping training have a measurable impact? – the answer is yes. The measurable impact is the ability to pass the end-of-course examination. But if 'measurable impact' means effectiveness as a peacekeeper, there is no instrument yet developed that measures that."

Peluk (2008) of the PPC wrote the following e-mail on their views:

- "Unfortunately, only individuals who have worked for the PPC as facilitators are able to access the facilitator community on the PPC website. However, we have passed your information on to our director of Africa programs for consideration should we undertake activities in South Africa;
- The PPC does not use UNITAR courses in developing our learning products, as we find they do not reflect the complexities of contemporary peace operations; and
- With regard to the academic accreditation of PPC courses, we are not accredited by any academic institution currently. For your information, it is our understanding that UN Integrated Training Services has suspended any recognition of training institution courses until they ascertain what their standards are for recognition, which UNITS is currently reviewing."

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that this paper is not the panacea for motivating a 'peacekeeping awareness' or 'sustaining peace in post-conflict zones' programme. To discuss the motivation for developing an international civil education ODEL programme with OER materials on peacekeeping, we courteously call upon interested researchers to join hands or to kindly invite us to join in on their projects. We also admit the need to research means of sustaining peace in post-conflict regions as proposed earlier by the PCF5 reviewers. Therefore we recommend the following:

- Launching international action research through:
 - UN structures (UNITAR POCI, UNESCO's OECD, UNITWIN and UNICEF);
 - The COL;
 - The PPC;
 - The African Union; and
 - The World Bank.

- An African higher education approach through:
 - The AAU;
 - The ACDE; and
 - The African regional university associations for western, central and southern Africa.

To conclude this paper with a practical example in sub-Saharan Africa, the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) of the South African government is already supporting an e-learning project through the Meraka Institute of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) into the rest of Africa (Cf. Meraka Institute 2007). The following organisations within the ODEL movement of Southern Africa could soon be expected to align their research with internationally accepted ODEL programmes, which include civil education peacekeeping OER / FLOSS:

- National Association for Distance Education and Open Learning of South Africa (NADEOSA);
- Distance Education Association for Southern Africa (DEASA);
- South African Association for Research Development in Higher Education (SAARDHE);
- Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA); and
- Southern African Society for Cooperative Education (SASCE).

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