



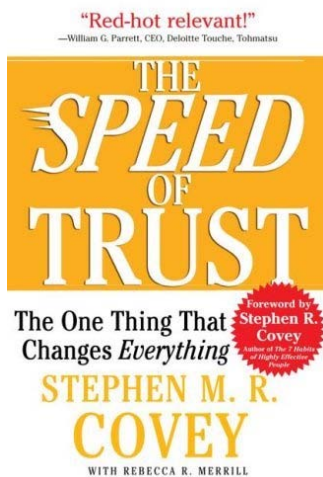
ODL COMMUNIQUÉ 31, 15 SEPTEMBER 2010

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1 THE SPEED OF (MIS)TRUST

Trust is lost, established or (sometimes) restored between life-partners, between employers and employees, between countries and between different stakeholders. When trust is lost or betrayed we realise that we often underestimate the impact of the precious character of trust, and how hard it is to restore trust when it has been compromised.



One of the most disturbing aspects of this year's ODL implementation plan was the often deep level of *mistrust* I encounter among many staff members regarding ODL as principle, the ODL processes and the different iterations of the 'power' and the 'pilot' courses. It seems as if the jury is permanently out to see whether this year's initiative will deliver on its promises. And it would seem as if the ODL project has permanently lost the trust of many individuals and stakeholders and no matter how hard I try, the mistrust and disillusionment is like a black hole into which hope disappears faster you can say "ODL".

In the book "The speed of trust" written by Stephen M.R. Covey (2006), he explores trust and the speed of trust in our personal and organisational lives. I found the book on the one hand deeply frustrating with some of its sweeping statements, Americanisms and claims (or pseudo-claims) of deep spiritual wisdom; but on the other hand, I found the way trust and mistrust unfolds in our lives as explored by Covey, as deeply illuminating. Covey (2006) claims on the cover of the book that trust is the one thing that changes *everything*.

Early in the book, Covey (2006:25) deconstructs some of the misconceptions regarding trust such as

- Trust is soft. He claims that trust “is hard, real, and quantifiable. It measurably affects both speed and cost”
- Trust is slow. “Nothing is as fast as the speed of trust”
- “Trust is built solely on integrity”. Not so. “Trust is a function of both character (which includes integrity) and competence”
- “Once lost, trust cannot be restored”. Covey claims “Though difficult, in most cases lost trust can be restored”
- “Trusting people is too risky”. Covey claims the contrary – “Not trusting people is a greater risk”

Covey (2006) proposes that trust is the result of a combination of integrity, intentions, capability and one’s track record. Covey (2006:62) starts his exploration by defining having ‘integrity’ as a situation where there is no “gap between intent and behaviour. ... People who are congruent act in harmony with their deepest values and beliefs. They walk their talk”. He quotes Mahatma Gandhi who said “My life is an indivisible whole, and all my activities run into one another... My life is my message” (Covey 2006:63). Covey states “The greater your integrity – the more honest, congruent, humble and courageous you are – the more credibility you will have and the more trust you will inspire” (2006:72).

Coupled with integrity is the awareness of one’s motives in doing something – what is your intention or motives in doing something (Covey 2006: 73). Add to integrity and intent, capability and one’s track record, you then have the basis from which to determine the level of trust you inspire. Covey (2006:127) continues to then explore 13 behaviours that impact on the level of trust we inspire. The behaviours include talking straight; demonstrate respect; create transparency; right wrongs; show loyalty; deliver results; get better; confront reality; clarify expectations; practice accountability; listen first; keep commitments; and extend trust (Covey 2006: 173-229).

One of the most enlightening sections in the book is Covey’s exploration of “Smart trust” (2006: 287-299) in which he distinguishes between four types of trust namely “no trust”, “blind trust”, distrust and “smart trust”. With “blind trust” there is a high propensity to trust regardless of the pros and cons. Therefore blind trust originates from being gullible and a low level of analysis of the pros and cons. When there is *no* trust, there is usually a *low* propensity to trust as well as a *low* level of analysis of the pros and cons. Distrust is the result of a low propensity to trust and a high level of analysis. In other words, you don’t trust easily and also over-analyse a situation. In contrast to these types of trusts, “smart trust” is a combination between a high propensity to trust *and* a high level of analysis. Covey’s (2006:290) Smart Trust™ Matrix and his discussion is really enlightening.

A chapter I personally found touching is the discussion on “Restoring trust when it has been lost” (Covey 2006:300). Lost or broken trust can be restored *but it is not always possible and restoring trust is never easy*. “Keep in mind that when you talk about restoring trust, you’re talking about changing someone else’s feelings about you and confidence in you. And that’s not something you can control. You *can’t make them* have confidence in you” (Covey 2006:303; emphasis added).

I started this short reflection by stating that breaching trust happens between partners, between employers and employees, and between stakeholders and that we often underestimate how precious trust is till we lose it. And then it is often too late. In the ODL implementation during this year, restoring the trust of many individuals and stakeholders is one of the constant challenges. And I realise that though it is possible to re-establish trust in ODL and its processes, it is extremely hard work and often impossible. As Covey (2006) warns that though there are many things we can do to restore trust, the final decision to trust again is not within the control of the person trying to restore trust.

Despite this somewhat depressing thought, I really hope that this year’s ODL implementation will be known for its integrity and transparent intentions and with behaviour that includes include talking straight; demonstrate respect; create transparency; right wrongs; show loyalty; deliver results; get better; confront reality; clarify expectations; practice accountability; listen first; keep commitments; and extend trust.

2 **DISPELLING SOME MYTHS AND FALLACIES**

There are a number of myths and fallacies that are being shared and circulated in the institution and at conferences regarding Unisa’s students, and trends in teaching and learning at Unisa. In order to prevent these myths from spreading..., here are some facts:

MYTH: Unisa’s students are getting younger every year.

FACT: The majority of Unisa students fall in the age group 20-29 (47,3%). In 2009 only 3,1% were below the age of 20. Actually, the percentage of students below the age of 20 has declined since 2006! In 2006 4, 4% of students were younger than 20. In 2007 this figure was 4, 3% and in 2008 4, 0%. In 2009 the number of students younger than 20 was 3, 1% of the total student population. From 2006 the average age of Unisa students therefore was between 30 and 31.

MYTH: The majority of Unisa students don’t have access to the Internet.

FACT: In 2010 there were 98 862 new registrations on *myUnisa*. There were **218 470** active Unisa students on *myUnisa* in 2010 (o far) with over 8 million hits. A full report on who these 218 470 students were (gender, race, location, age, etc) will be tabled soon.

MYTH: Students have to wait for their study materials to know when their assignments are due and which prescribed books is required.

FACT: The moment a student's registration is activated, he or she has access to ALL their study materials on *myUnisa*. They can download all their materials free-of-charge at any regional office using the available toasters. There is no reason why students should wait for their study package before they can start to plan or order their prescribed text books.

Yes, there are a number of issues that continue to concern all of us, such as incomplete study packages, or the postponement of assignment dates and student complaints about not getting through to Unisa; but there are many myths regarding teaching and learning at Unisa that we should address... one by one.

3 NADEOSA CONFERENCE 6-8 SEPTEMBER 2010

The 2010 Nadeosa conference was held on the campus of North West University in Potchefstroom from 6-8 September. Of a total of 233 delegates, there were 56 Unisa delegates (24%). Just over 100 papers were presented, of which about 20 papers were presented by Unisa staff.

To all those who presented papers, well done! You did Unisa proud!

4 AN OVERVIEW OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- The smaller working committee of ODL Task teams 4 and 6 will meet on Thursday 16 September from 14:00-16:00 in ORT8-16.
- The next STLSC will be on 20 September 2010.

5 WORKSHOP WITH THE REGIONS, 13 SEPTEMBER 2010

On Monday 13 September a workshop was held on the Sunnyside campus with representatives from all the regions and key departments at Unisa such as HR, Estates, DSPQA, TSDL, and ICT. The ODL implementation plan for 2010 foresees that Unisa should rethink (if not re-imagine) the roles, functions and structures of the regions. Almost 50 participants explored current and future trends in and affecting the regions. It was stated clearly from the start that this one-day workshop was the *start* of the conversation regarding the role, functions and structures of the regions and not the end. It would have been impossible to redesign the regional roles and functions in the scope of one day and therefore the discussions served as a baseline from which further discussions will take place. In their feedback on the workshop, participants shared the most worthwhile elements of the workshop, least worthwhile elements and elements (whether positive or negative) which made an impression during the day. Some of the comments are as follows:

Under the “most worthwhile” elements were comments such as ...

- “For regions to air their frustrations and hopes which were filled with ambiguities”
- “...The discussion is important because it begins to give light to the direction that the university wants to take”
- “The most worthwhile aspect is to discover that the regions are marginalised. Also that the ODL model does not talk about the challenges of the regions”
- “Regions were able to point out the gaps/unilateral decisions by top management that impact severely on the regions”
- “Conversation about the trends in the regions. It created a common understanding regarding possible futures”

Under the “least worthwhile elements” of the workshop were comments such as

- “Whether or not the contributions made by the regions will be considered in the final recommendations to the decision makers”
- “The least worthwhile was to discover that nobody has answers about the restructuring of the entire institution and yet that is going to impact on everybody”
- “We still seem to be in the dark on most aspects of ODL”
- “Uncertainty whether the fears and inputs made by the attendees will be taken into consideration”
- “No decisions or way forward. The workshop was more about listing our feelings and what do we think about the future”
- “There were no academics at the workshop. No integration or common understanding developed”
- “I am very scared, because it sounds as if we are stuck in the mud pulling against each other”
- “N/A. Everything that was discussed here kept me glued to listening and interactive debate was really empowering”

Aspects of the workshop that made an impression were

- “Workshop was enlightening especially the presentation by HR (Mr Eloff) and the challenge we are facing with regard to resources”
- “The positive aspect of the workshop was to be given a platform to voice our concerns ... with the hope that the concerns will be taken into consideration”
- “Fear – we seem to be moving forward in terms of expressing ourselves without fear”
- “We are still a long way from understanding the full implications of ODL on the regions”
- “The commitment and passion of the colleagues in the region and despite being marginalised sometimes it was about service to the students”
- “Would have liked more definite outcomes”
- “The fact that the regions unanimously feel isolated and not part of Unisa”

Once I have written up the full report on the workshop, I will share the report with the Unisa community in order to celebrate the input of the regions during the workshop but also to ensure that we “do not talk about them without them”.

The workshop decided that

- Dr Mokhaba (Executive Director: Learner Support) will invite the ODL coordinator to the monthly meetings with the regional directors
- The ODL coordinator will convene a videoconference with representatives from the regions before the end of October.
- Ways will be investigated to increase communication between the different stakeholders

6 A CELEBRATION OF INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING AT UNISA, 29 OCTOBER 2010

All Unisa staff is invited to a celebration of innovation in teaching and learning at Unisa on 29 October 2010 in the Dr Miriam Makeba Concert Hall, on the Pretoria campus from 08:30 - 13:30.

At this event we will celebrate innovative practices in teaching and learning ranging from the use of tutors, E-tutors, Mxit and other social media, portfolios, satellite broadcasts and video conferencing, etc. As we would like to provide lunch for everyone attending the event, it is essential that you book a place by sending an e-mail to the Project Administrator of the ODL Project, Ms Tshoanelo Mokoena, mokoets@unisa.ac.za.

Detail of the event will be circulated closer to the date. Don't miss this opportunity ...

7 TOWARDS AN ODL PEDAGOGY

How do we teach in an ODL context on the African continent?

For many years the above question was easy to answer. The answer entailed that Unisa was dedicated to develop well-designed printed learning materials which were posted to students. Students' learning was continuously assessed through written (and posted) assignments and feedback was then posted back to students. The final assessment of learning was in the form of summative written examinations. And then the process started again. Most materials were redesigned and/or updated on a three-year cycle with many of the materials standing unchanged for longer than five years. Pedagogy at Unisa was mostly a transmission of content via printed and posted materials. There were furthermore very few activities in the study materials and the only activities were in the form of assignments. Very few modules had tutors.

Enter technology. Enter *myUnisa*. Enter Satellite Broadcasting and Video Conferencing. Enter face-to-face tutors. Enter expanded regional facilities. Enter group discussions. Enter Peer Collaborative Helpers. Enter YouTube. Enter Open Educational Resources (OERs). Enter Facebook, Mxit, Twitter, Ning, and iTunes. Enter mobile technologies. Enter E-books. Enter podcasts, onscreen marking, weighted discussion forums, intelligent MCQs, portfolios and group assignments. Enter being online, on-call, on-duty 24/7. Enter the need for research-led teaching. Enter community-engaged teaching, learning and assessment. Enter more and more stakeholders claiming a stake in what is taught and how it is taught. Enter more and more under-prepared students than ever before.

Enter the question: how do we teach in an ODL context on the African continent?

8 ODL REPOSITORY AND BLOG

All the ODL task team reports, the overview of the recommendations of the STLSC and other ODL documents are available on the Unisa Library's Institutional Repository at <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/dspace/handle/10500/3072> (accessed 13 September 2010). The repository is updated on a regular basis and if you register on the repository, you will get notifications of any new uploads.

You are also most welcome to comment on this (and previous) ODL Communiqués on the Unisa Staff website. On the right hand side of the Unisa Staff website, you will see a section titled "Important links" under which you must then click on "Blogs". On the blog page, you will notice two links namely "E-connect" and "Open Distance Learning". If you follow the latter you will be able to read and comment on the ODL Communiqués.

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Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this ODL Communiqué represent my personal viewpoints and do not represent the viewpoint of any other member of the Unisa community.