

ACEEEO Annual Conference and General Assembly Meeting: Professional Education of Electoral Actors

Presentation Notes for Plenary session: Professional Education – Part 1
September 19, 2007

THE IMPORTANCE OF ELECTORAL EDUCATION: A PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE TO EDUCATING ELECTION PROFESSIONALS

Introduction

- I will discuss some of the core values and challenges that we face today in professional education.
- I will talk about the general themes of professional education, followed by the challenges we face and future trends.
- To take this topic beyond a dialogue, I would also like to present you with a proposal.

General Themes for Professional Education

- The basic principles of training are a reflection of an Election Officer's core values. These include:
 - Impartiality
 - Transparency
 - Fairness
 - Equality of law
 - Ethics
- Beyond the basic principles, training needs to be geared towards different audiences:
 - Executive:
 - Focused issues such as:
 - How does an EMB relate to a government without sacrificing its independence? What is an acceptable relationship between an EMB and government?
 - Public transparency of an EMB - are there things that should be kept out of the public?
 - Technical & professional staff:

- Focused on proficiency in a specific area
 - Temporary staff/ Poll workers:
 - Clear understanding of the process
 - Preparation for how to deal with possible cases that arise on Election Day.
- Yet training needs to be provided for staff at all levels – voters expect the same standard of service from every level of staff
- These values should be shared international through:
 - Observation missions
 - Consultations
 - Forums
 - International associations

Common Challenges

- Relations between an EMB and political parties:
 - Reactions, both positive and negative, to the verification of a political party.
 - External pressure from parties, especially in situations where Election Officials are nominated or aligned with a party.
- Emphasis on the process rather than the results:
 - Lines between power and authority, including a system of checks and balances
 - recognition of boundaries
 - transparency, especially in making decisions
 - Long term credibility over short term gain
- Training continuity:
 - Due to the continuing changes in electoral technology and procedures, there is a need for regular training/education.
 - This is increasingly important for young EMBs that have new staff with limited experience and a restricted budget.
- Finding funding for training is an ongoing challenge.

Looking Ahead

- Teaching and sharing of techniques.
 - How are they implemented worldwide?
 - What has worked?
 - More time should be dedicated to conducting research on the subject – develop a comprehensive study of best practices and lessons learned.
 - One option is to take advantage of international meetings by creating a more formal setting for sharing of experiences and best practices.
 - Another option is to create global networks of practitioners – such as BRIDGE – to share information, ideas, and best practices through professional training.
- We are in the throws of professionalism.
 - Some institutes and organizations have taken the lead in implemented courses (American University and University of Paris II).
 - Yet this can be taken further. For example by creating academic certificates and diplomas.
- The time has come to take these conferences to the next level.
- To do this, IFES would like to propose the following:
 - IFES will be happy to work with ACEEEO to incorporate professional training sessions into future ACEEEO meetings by developing professional certificate programs.
 - These programs would be led by academics and practitioners from leading institutions such as AU and the University of Paris II, and would be offered in conjunction with the ACEEEO annual meetings.
 - Doing so will merge the academic world with that of international organizations and EMB.