

Research on Teaching Reform of NGO Management Course for Public Administration Majors in Civil Aviation Universities

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Abstract: With the rapid expansion of the global civil aviation industry and the increasing complexity of its social responsibilities, the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) has become increasingly prominent. These organizations operate in areas such as passenger rights protection, environmental sustainability, disaster response, and community engagement around airports. Consequently, there is a growing demand for aviation professionals who possess not only technical expertise but also a deep understanding of NGO governance and collaboration. This paper addresses the unique challenges faced by Public Administration majors in civil aviation universities regarding the teaching of the "NGO Management" course. It identifies key issues, including a disconnect between the generic public administration curriculum and the specific context of the aviation sector, a theory-heavy approach with limited practical application, and the underutilization of the university's inherent aviation resources. Drawing on contemporary pedagogical theories such as experiential learning and competency-based education, this paper proposes a comprehensive reform framework centered on the concept of "Aviation-Oriented, Competency-Based, and Practice-Driven" teaching. Specific reform strategies are detailed, including the redesign of course content to incorporate aviation-specific NGO case studies, the adoption of innovative teaching methodologies like project-based learning and simulation of stakeholder negotiations, and the enhancement of practical components through industry collaborations and an "Aviation NGO Forum." The paper concludes that such a targeted reform is essential to bridge the gap between theory and practice, thereby cultivating future aviation public administrators who are

equipped to effectively engage with and manage relationships with the diverse NGO ecosystem within the industry.

Keywords: Civil Aviation Universities; NGO Management Curriculum Design; Public Administration Majors; Teaching Reform.

1. Introduction

The global civil aviation sector is a critical driver of economic development and social connectivity. However, its operations are intertwined with a wide array of social and environmental concerns, ranging from noise pollution and carbon emissions to passenger welfare and community integration. In this complex landscape, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have emerged as pivotal actors. Environmental NGOs advocate for greener aviation technologies and sustainable practices, consumer protection groups safeguard passenger rights, and community-based organizations address the social impact of airport expansions. The ability of future aviation managers and public administrators to understand, engage with, and collaborate with these NGOs is no longer a peripheral skill but a core competency for sustainable industry governance. Public Administration programs in civil aviation universities are uniquely positioned to train professionals for this very purpose. The "NGO Management" course, a staple in many Public Administration curricula, is theoretically designed to equip students with the knowledge of NGO operations, governance, and their role in society. However, a significant disconnect often exists between the standard, generic delivery of this course and the specific, high-stakes context of the aviation industry. Students may graduate with abstract theories about the third sector but lack the specific knowledge and skills to navigate the intricate relationships between airports, airlines, regulatory bodies, and the NGO ecosystem.

This paper argues for a fundamental reform of

the "NGO Management" course within the context of civil aviation universities. The reform must be purposeful, moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to create a specialized, relevant, and applied learning experience. The primary research question is: How can the "NGO Management" course for Public Administration majors in civil aviation universities be reformed to better align with the industry's specific needs and cultivate students' practical competencies in engaging with aviation-related NGOs? To address this question, the paper first analyzes the current shortcomings of the course. It then constructs a reform framework based on modern educational principles. Subsequently, it proposes concrete reform measures covering content, methodology, and practice, all supported by a curated list of contemporary academic references.

2. Analysis of Current Shortcomings in the Existing Course

The current teaching model for the "NGO Management" course in many civil aviation universities suffers from several interrelated deficiencies that hinder its effectiveness.

2.1 Disconnect from the Aviation Context

The curriculum design of the non-governmental organization management course in civil aviation universities plays a crucial role in cultivating talents with comprehensive knowledge and practical abilities to meet the needs of the industry. However, current curriculum designs often exhibit certain deficiencies that hinder the effectiveness of teaching and learning outcomes. One prominent issue is the outdated content of the curriculum, which fails to keep pace with the rapid development and transformation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the civil aviation sector. For instance, the existing textbooks and teaching materials may not adequately cover emerging trends such as digitalization, globalization, and sustainability, which are increasingly important in modern NGO operations. This disconnect between theoretical knowledge and real-world applications results in students being ill-prepared for actual workplace challenges.

Another key problem lies in the inadequate integration of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The curriculum design often prioritizes theoretical teaching over practical

training, leading to a gap between what students learn in the classroom and the actual demands of the industry. For example, topics such as project management, fundraising, and stakeholder engagement are essential for NGO professionals but are rarely taught through hands-on activities or real-world simulations. This imbalance not only limits students' ability to develop practical competencies but also reduces their motivation and interest in the subject matter. Overall, these issues highlight the urgent need for curriculum reform to better align with industry requirements and enhance students' preparedness for future employment.

The most prominent issue is the lack of contextualization. Standard textbooks and syllabi for NGO management are designed for a general audience, with examples drawn from broad fields like humanitarian aid, health, or education [1]. While foundational, this approach fails to resonate with students training for a highly specialized industry like aviation. The unique regulatory environment, the technical nature of aviation issues (e.g., decarbonization, SAF), and the specific types of NGOs active in this sector are rarely explored in depth. This creates a perception among students that the course is irrelevant to their future careers, leading to disengagement.

2.2 Overemphasis on Theory and Lack of Practical Application

There is a significant lack of practical cases related specifically to the civil aviation industry integrated into the curriculum. NGOs operating within the civil aviation domain have unique characteristics and operational models that require specialized understanding. However, current course content tends to rely on general cases from other industries, neglecting the specific context and nuances of NGOs involved in areas such as airport management, aviation safety, or air transport logistics. As a result, students struggle to apply theoretical concepts to practical scenarios relevant to their future careers.

The pedagogical approach is often heavily skewed towards theoretical knowledge transmission. Students learn about NGO typologies, legal frameworks, strategic management, and fundraising in a lecture-based format [2]. However, they are given few opportunities to apply this knowledge to realistic, aviation-related scenarios. How does one

negotiate with an environmental NGO protesting a new runway? How can an airport collaborate with a local community NGO to mitigate its social impact? The absence of experiential learning leaves students ill-prepared to handle the complex, often contentious, real-world interactions they will face [3].

2.3 Assessment Methods Focused on Rote Learning

The existing evaluation system for the non-governmental organization management course in civil aviation universities is typically characterized by a heavy reliance on final exams as the primary means of assessing students' learning outcomes. While exams can effectively measure students' mastery of theoretical knowledge, they are insufficient for comprehensively evaluating their overall performance, practical abilities, and learning processes. This overreliance on summative assessment neglects the importance of formative assessment, which provides ongoing feedback and guidance to students throughout the course, helping them identify areas for improvement and track their progress.

One major drawback of the current evaluation system is its inability to accurately assess students' practical abilities. NGOs in the civil aviation industry require professionals who can apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, such as managing projects, coordinating with stakeholders, and addressing complex operational challenges. However, final exams often focus on memorization and regurgitation of information, rather than assessing students' ability to analyze problems, make decisions, and implement solutions. As a result, students may perform well on exams but struggle to demonstrate their practical skills in actual workplace scenarios. Assessment often relies on traditional closed-book exams or standard academic essays, which primarily test students' ability to memorize and reproduce theoretical concepts [4]. This form of assessment does not effectively measure the critical competencies required for NGO engagement, such as stakeholder analysis, negotiation skills, strategic communication, and project design.

Furthermore, the existing evaluation system fails to consider students' learning attitudes and engagement in the learning process. Factors such as class participation, teamwork, and initiative in seeking additional learning opportunities are

important indicators of students' commitment to their education and their potential for professional growth. However, these aspects are often overlooked in an evaluation system that primarily focuses on final exam results. This not only undermines students' motivation to actively engage in the course but also provides an incomplete picture of their overall learning experience. To address these issues, it is imperative to develop a more comprehensive evaluation system that incorporates diverse assessment methods and criteria to better reflect students' abilities, attitudes, and learning outcomes.

3. Constructing a Reform Framework: Aviation-Oriented, Competency-Based, and Practice-Driven

To address these shortcomings, a new framework for the course is proposed, built on three core pillars.

3.1 Aviation-Oriented: Embedding the Course in the Sector's Ecosystem

The cornerstone of the proposed reform is the principle of being "Aviation-Oriented." This necessitates a fundamental re-contextualization of the entire curriculum, moving it from a generic public administration framework to one deeply embedded within the unique ecosystem of civil aviation. The goal is to ensure that every module, from the introduction to the intricacies of strategic management and leadership, is explicitly and meaningfully linked to the sector's realities. This approach transforms abstract theories into tangible tools for understanding and navigating the aviation environment.

This contextualization is achieved through a multi-faceted strategy. Firstly, the course content must be meticulously curated with aviation-specific case studies and examples. Instead of discussing generic NGO fundraising, students would analyze how an airport alliance collaborates with an environmental NGO to fund and develop Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) projects. Lessons on stakeholder management would center on real-world scenarios, such as the complex negotiations between airport expansion authorities, local community action groups, and environmental NGOs concerned with noise pollution and habitat loss. This makes the learning immediately relevant and equips students with reference points from their own industry. Secondly, bridging the gap between

theory and practice requires the integration of industry practitioners directly into the classroom. Inviting guest speakers—such as a sustainability manager from a major airline, a community relations lead from an airport authority, or a campaign director from an aviation-focused NGO like the International Coalition for Sustainable Aviation (ICSA)—provides invaluable, ground-level perspectives. These practitioners can share firsthand experiences about the challenges of cross-sector collaboration, the nuances of corporate social responsibility in a highly regulated industry, and the skills truly needed to be effective. This not only enriches the curriculum but also fosters professional networking and mentorship opportunities for students. Finally, assignments and projects must be designed to directly address the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of aviation and civil society. A core semester project could task student groups with developing a comprehensive "Stakeholder Engagement Plan" for a new airport terminal, requiring them to identify relevant NGOs, anticipate their concerns, and design a collaborative strategy. Another assignment might involve drafting a position paper for an airline on how to respond to a public campaign launched by a consumer rights NGO. By working on these authentic, industry-relevant tasks, students transition from passive learners to active problem-solvers, developing the critical thinking and analytical skills essential for their future careers as public administrators within the dynamic world of civil aviation.

3.2 Competency-Based: Shifting from Knowledge Acquisition to Skill Application

The proposed reform advocates for a fundamental paradigm shift in the course's educational philosophy, moving its primary objective from students merely "knowing what" (theoretical concepts) to demonstrably "knowing how" (practical application). Inspired by robust competency-based education models, this transformation requires the course to define a clear and measurable set of learning outcomes squarely focused on cultivating the practical skills essential for future aviation public administrators [4]. This approach ensures that graduates are not just repositories of information but are equipped with a tangible toolkit of competencies to navigate the complex interface between the aviation industry and civil society. A

competency-based framework must articulate specific, actionable skills that students will master. The key competencies extend beyond the initial list to include a more comprehensive suite:

(a) **Analyzing Influence and Power Dynamics:** Students must learn to systematically analyze how different types of NGOs—from global advocacy groups like the International Coalition for Sustainable Aviation (ICSA) to local community associations—exert influence on aviation policy-making and shape corporate strategy at airlines and airports. This involves mapping stakeholders, understanding their tactics (from public campaigns to technical consultations), and assessing their impact on regulatory decisions and corporate sustainability reports.

(b) **Designing and Managing Collaborative Projects:** Moving beyond abstract recognition of partnership benefits, students should develop the competency to design a detailed, feasible collaborative project. This includes conducting a joint-needs assessment, defining shared objectives, creating governance structures, developing joint funding proposals, and establishing key performance indicators to measure the success of an initiative, such as a community noise reduction program co-managed by an airport and a local residents' NGO.

(c) **Mastering Strategic Communication and Negotiation:** A critical skill is the ability to formulate and execute communication strategies for engaging with a spectrum of NGO stakeholders, particularly critical or adversarial ones. This competency involves crafting targeted messages for different audiences, preparing for public consultations, conducting professional negotiations, and de-escalating conflicts. It emphasizes emotional intelligence and the ability to find common ground in contentious situations.

(d) **Applying Ethical Reasoning in Complex Dilemmas:** Students must be adept at applying ethical frameworks to real-world dilemmas involving corporate social responsibility and NGO accountability within aviation [5]. This includes navigating scenarios where an airline's economic interests conflict with an environmental NGO's demands, or assessing the accountability of an NGO itself in representing community interests. This fosters a nuanced understanding of ethics that moves beyond

simplistic right-or-wrong binaries.

3.3 Practice-Driven: Transforming the Classroom into a Dynamic Workshop

The third pillar of the reform is the imperative to be "Practice-Driven," fundamentally prioritizing "learning by doing" over passive knowledge reception. This requires a radical restructuring of the curriculum, dedicating a significant portion—ideally the majority—of contact hours and student effort to active and experiential learning methodologies. Moving beyond sporadic exercises, this approach positions practical application as the central engine of the learning process. This philosophy is firmly supported by educational research, aligning with the principles of project-based learning (PBL) and simulation, which have been consistently shown to significantly enhance student engagement, deepen conceptual understanding, and improve knowledge retention [6].

The core of this transformation involves a physical and pedagogical metamorphosis of the learning environment. The classroom must be reimagined from a passive lecture hall, where students are mere recipients of information, into a dynamic and collaborative workshop. In this workshop, students become active agents, directly tackling messy, unstructured, real-world problems that mirror the challenges they will face in their professional careers. This shift demands a corresponding change in the role of the instructor, from a "sage on the stage" to a "guide on the side"—a facilitator who mentors, questions, and resources student-led inquiry. To operationalize this, the course will integrate a scaffolded sequence of experiential activities. The cornerstone would be a semester-long, complex project-based learning (PBL) initiative. For instance, student groups could be tasked with developing a full-scale "Community Engagement and Sustainability Strategy" for a hypothetical airport expansion. This single, capstone project would necessitate them to apply a wide range of competencies: identifying and analyzing relevant NGOs, negotiating mutually beneficial agreements, designing public consultation processes, and creating robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This mirrors the authentic, multi-faceted tasks they would encounter in a real public affairs or corporate social responsibility role. Complementing the sustained PBL experience would be targeted, high-fidelity simulations.

These immersive role-playing exercises would force students to think on their feet and apply their knowledge under pressure. A simulated public hearing, for example, would assign students roles as airport executives, environmental NGO campaigners, local community leaders, and government regulators. Preparing for and participating in such a simulation cultivates crucial skills in strategic communication, persuasive argumentation, empathy, and real-time problem-solving in a contentious environment. Furthermore, practical tools workshops would be integrated to teach hands-on skills, such as using GIS software to map stakeholder communities or social media analytics tools to monitor NGO campaigns. By immersing students in this practice-rich ecosystem, the course ensures that theoretical knowledge from the "Aviation-Oriented" module is not just understood but is internalized and transformed into a portable and potent set of professional skills, fully preparing them for the complexities of the aviation NGO landscape.

4. Specific Measures for Teaching Reform

Based on the above framework, the following concrete reform measures are proposed.

4.1 Content Restructuring: Integrating the Aviation Dimension

The course content should be systematically revised to include:

- (a) A New Module on the Aviation NGO Landscape: This module would introduce students to the specific types of NGOs operating in the aviation sphere, such as the International Coalition for Sustainable Aviation (ICSA), Airports Council International (ACI) committees on community engagement, and local community action groups.
- (b) Aviation-Infused Core Topics:
- (c) Strategic Management: Students analyze the strategic plans of real aviation companies (e.g., IAG, Delta) and identify points of alignment or conflict with NGO agendas.
- (d) Fundraising and Resource Development: Instead of generic grant writing, students learn about corporate partnerships, sustainability-linked financing, and co-funding models common in aviation-NGO collaborations.
- (e) Leadership and Governance: Case studies focus on leadership challenges in managing partnerships between airports and local

communities, emphasizing adaptive management in a crisis [7].

(f) Digital Transformation: A dedicated session on how NGOs use digital tools for advocacy and how aviation companies can digitally engage with them, incorporating themes from [8].

4.2 Methodological Innovation: Adopting Active Learning Strategies

Project-Based Learning (PBL): The core of the course could be a semester-long group project. Each group would be tasked with developing a detailed "Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration Plan" for a specific, real-world aviation challenge. For example, "Propose a plan for Beijing Capital International Airport to collaborate with environmental NGOs to achieve its 2030 carbon neutrality target." This requires research, analysis, and creative problem-solving [6].

Case Studies and Simulations: Replace generic cases with detailed aviation-specific ones. For instance, using the case of the Heathrow Airport expansion and its protracted negotiations with multiple NGOs. Following case analysis, a simulation exercise can be conducted where students role-play as airport executives, NGO leaders, government regulators, and community representatives in a public consultation meeting. This forces students to apply theoretical knowledge dynamically and develop negotiation and communication skills [2].

Flipped Classroom: For foundational theoretical knowledge, a flipped classroom model can be adopted [9]. Students watch pre-recorded lectures and read materials before class. In-class time is then freed up for deeper discussion, case analysis, and project work, making the learning process more efficient and interactive.

4.3 Enhancing Practical Components: Bridging the Campus and the Industry

Establishing an "Aviation NGO Forum": The university can initiate an annual or bi-annual forum that brings together students, faculty, aviation industry leaders, and representatives from various NGOs. This provides a neutral platform for dialogue and allows students to observe real-world dynamics and network with potential future collaborators.

Industry Mentor Program: Invite professionals from airport management, airline corporate affairs departments, and aviation NGOs to serve as mentors for student groups. They can provide

feedback on project proposals, share insights from their experience, and offer career guidance. **Field Research and Internships:** Facilitate short-term field research projects where students can interview stakeholders at a local airport. Furthermore, the university should actively seek and promote internship opportunities for students within the corporate social responsibility (CSR) or public affairs departments of aviation companies or directly with aviation-focused NGOs.

4.4 Reforming Assessment Methods

Assessment should be aligned with the competency-based goals. A multi-faceted assessment system is recommended:

(a) **Project Portfolio (40%):** The final output of the PBL group project, assessed on its feasibility, depth of analysis, creativity, and professionalism.

(b) **Simulation Performance (20%):** Evaluation of a student's performance in the role-playing simulation, based on preparation, understanding of their role's perspective, communication effectiveness, and problem-solving ability.

(c) **Critical Reflection Journal (20%):** An individual assignment where students reflect on the readings, guest lectures, and their own learning process, connecting theory with practice and developing a critical perspective on the sector [10].

(d) **Peer Assessment (10%):** Evaluation of individual contributions within the project group.

(e) **Final Concept Test (10%):** A concise exam to ensure mastery of essential theoretical concepts.

5. Conclusion

The "NGO Management" course for Public Administration majors in civil aviation universities stands at a critical juncture. To remain relevant and valuable, it must evolve from a generic public administration subject into a specialized, industry-focused training program. The proposed reform, guided by the "Aviation-Oriented, Competency-Based, and Practice-Driven" framework, offers a comprehensive pathway for this transformation. By deeply integrating aviation context into the curriculum, adopting active learning methodologies like PBL and simulation, and forging stronger links with the industry through forums and mentorship, the course can become a

powerful vehicle for cultivating a new generation of aviation public administrators. These graduates will not only understand the theory of the third sector but will possess the practical skills, strategic mindset, and ethical grounding necessary to build constructive partnerships, manage conflicts, and contribute to a more sustainable and socially responsible aviation industry. Future work will involve piloting this reformed curriculum and conducting empirical studies to measure its impact on student learning outcomes and career preparedness.

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