

Accredited Aircrew Education System for the South African Air Force. A Status Report on the Implementation of the Future Education System.

Abstract

A number of significant changes took place since 1994 that demanded fundamental changes to the way the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the South African Air Force (SAAF) conducted education and training. Major arms acquisition programs were announced very soon after the internationally recognised South African Government came into power – the Strategic Defence Package (SDP) being the most noteworthy. The acquisition entailed the replacement of main equipment and the modernization of the SAAF Combat Capability within a relatively short period.

The outdated entry level Impala Fighter Training System was earmarked for replacement with the Hawk Lead-In Fighter Trainer (LIFT) whilst the multi role Cheetah C & D combat aircraft were to be replaced by the 4th generation Gripen Advanced Light Fighter Aircraft (ALFA). The Astra (PC 7 MK II) had just replaced the Harvard and Impala Mk I Basic Flying Training platforms which elevated the SAAF aircrew training system to systems-based flying training utilizing self-paced computer based training (CBT) courseware.

The sound pre-1994 aircrew training and education system proved it's worth during the Angolan conflict but did not meet all the future requirements brought about by the significant changes in the SAAF environment. The new acquisition programs made provision for service training on the equipment but did not address the underlying theoretical education needs of the service members selected to operate the systems. The Military Academy (Faculty of Military Science) developed a model to meet the future education needs for SAAF aircrew.

The education system had to meet the accreditation requirements, make full use of e-learning in order to take the education to the student and synchronise with the functional service training institutions. The model had to accommodate the new student profile, build on the existing theoretical courses to fill the technology gap created by the introduction of the new systems, without compromising the status of the existing B Mil Programs. Unnecessary duplication with service training institutions as regards theoretical content had to be avoided. This presentation gives a brief description of the education model and report on the Future SAAF Aircrew Education System implementation status.

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