

Impact case study (REF3b)

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| <p>Institution: University of Hull</p> |
| <p>Unit of Assessment: C19: Business and Management Studies</p> |
| <p>Title of case study: Informing the Development of a National Conflict Resolution Program for Colombian Schools</p> |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research undertaken in the University of Hull into systemic mediation led to the development of the Hermes Programme. This is a schools-based initiative, run by the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce in Colombia, designed to disseminate non-violent conflict resolution techniques throughout Colombian society. Hermes is currently working in 360 schools and operates with 89 professionals who work directly with schools and local communities. These professionals train approximately 50,000 people per year (students, parents, teachers, school staff and volunteers) in basic conflict resolution skills. Also, 10,000 volunteers disseminate peaceful conflict resolution methods among a wider population. By 2009, the Hermes Programme had reached over 1,200,000 people, and in February to June 2013 alone, over 343,000 individuals attended Hermes talks on peaceful conflict resolution, showing a substantial recent increase in the reach of the programme.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The Centre for Systems Studies in the Business School at the University of Hull has run a research programme on critical systems thinking (CST) since its inception. From 1996-2002, Prof Gerald Midgley (who was then a Senior Research Fellow at Hull) collaborated with Dr Luis Pinzón (Universidad de los Andes, Colombia) on the first application of CST to business mediation practice. This involved (i) the development of a substantive body of new theory on boundaries and ethics; (ii) the production of a new methodology for ‘systemic mediation’; and (iii) action research to support the production, application and evaluation of this methodology.</p> <p>Five years of action research fieldwork was undertaken with the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce (BCC) in Colombia to develop a new systemic mediation approach for use in business conflict resolution. The research demonstrated that participants are often dissatisfied by the outcomes of mediation, even when a financial settlement is reached. This is because participants also want a chance to have their moral reasoning heard and appreciated. Therefore, the new mediation approach (developed through the research) focused on facilitating the exploration of moral frameworks and boundaries of concern in mediation sessions, to give the participants a deeper understanding of their own and other people’s perspectives. This increases satisfaction with outcomes compared with the more traditional mediation approach used previously by the BCC. Underpinning the development of the systemic mediation approach was a new theoretical model of boundaries and ethics, giving mediators a visual modelling language to represent the concerns and ethical perspectives of participants in a conflict, which can inform more effective intervention. The research also demonstrated that mediators are not morally neutral, and often influence mediation outcomes with taken-for-granted assumptions and values. Therefore, collective learning about the mediators’ own moral frameworks and theoretical assumptions is invaluable, to allow mediators to develop a more reflective practice and be held accountable for their interventions by their peers.</p> |
| <p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midgley, G and Pinzón, L (2011). The Implications of Boundary Critique for Conflict Prevention. <i>Journal of the Operational Research Society</i>, 62, 1543-1554. • Midgley, G and Pinzón, L (2013). Systemic Mediation: Moral Reasoning and Boundaries of Concern. <i>Systems Research and Behavioral Science</i>, 30: DOI: 10.1002/sres.2228 • Pinzón L and Midgley G (2000). Developing a Systemic Model for the Evaluation of Conflicts. <i>Systems Research & Behavioral Science</i>, 17, 493-512. <p>The 2011 paper is in a journal ranked 3* by the Association of Business Schools (ABS). It takes</p> |

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the theoretical model of boundaries and ethics mentioned above (along with earlier critical systems theory) and shows how it can be used to derive recommendations for conflict *prevention* (not just mediation when a conflict already exists).

The 2013 paper is in an ABS 2* journal. It summarises the systemic mediation methodology (including the underpinning theoretical model of boundaries and ethics) and compares it with five major mediation paradigms that are widely discussed in the literature to show the added value that systemic mediation can offer.

The 2000 paper is also in an ABS 2* journal, and presents a model of the different variables that need to be accounted for when mediators evaluate a conflict. This was developed early in the collaboration between Midgley and Pinzón, before the empirical research was started.

All these papers are available on request.

The relationship between the research, publications and impact are non-linear. The original research was undertaken in 1996-2002, but most of it was not written up for refereed publication until 2011-2013, when Gerald Midgley and Luis Pinzón re-awoke their collaboration. The impacts started in 2003, although only those experienced post-January 2008 are discussed in detail below.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

In 2003, Luis Pinzón started a second systemic action research project with the Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre at the BCC. It was explicitly designed to draw on Midgley and Pinzón's research (reported earlier) to develop the Hermes Programme. Hermes is a national, schools-based programme designed to disseminate conflict resolution techniques throughout Colombia, focusing first and foremost on influencing the next generation. The intention is to make a longer-term impact on the high levels of violence in Colombian society. Hermes has been operating since 2003, but only impacts since January 2008 are reported below. However, it is important to acknowledge earlier activities because the post-2008 successes were path-dependent on the original research, the good working relationship between Luis Pinzón and the BCC, and the effective early development of Hermes (2003-2007).

The design of Hermes in 2003 was influenced by the underpinning research in several ways. First, the programme was based on an analysis of stakeholders' interests and moral frameworks, using the novel approach presented in Midgley and Pinzón (2013). Second, the mediation approaches incorporated into Hermes were selected or designed through reflection on the mediation paradigms discussed in that same paper. Third, an exercise was undertaken to critique the BCC's previous experiences of developing mediation programmes, using the theory of boundaries and ethics discussed in Midgley and Pinzón (2011). Fourth, a reflective practice approach was institutionalised in Hermes, based firmly on the reflective practice model proposed by Midgley and Pinzón (2013). Fifth, all the professionals associated with Hermes have been trained with explicit reference to the theory, modelling language and findings from the Hull-based research. These professionals have passed the knowledge on to many thousands of school-based trainees.

Hermes is currently working in 360 schools [1]; operates with 89 professionals who work directly with schools and local communities; trains approximately 50,000 people per year (including students and their parents, teachers and school staff) in basic conflict resolution skills; and disseminates peaceful conflict resolution methods among a wider population. All of these stakeholders should be viewed as indirect beneficiaries of the research and its impact on Hermes.

In addition to reaching children in schools, those who leave schools (and also volunteer school managers) are invited to participate in the programme as members of a conflict management network called RENACEG (National Network of School Managers and Conciliators). This network "allows them to extend their influence beyond the boundaries of their own school and benefit children in other educational institutions" (UNICEF, 2009, p.21) [6]. In 2013, approximately 10,000 school leavers are active participants in the network, organising 'conciliation workshop days' in

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local communities, which help to resolve and manage local conflicts. RENACEG also disseminates information on dispute resolution theory and methods, drawing directly and indirectly on the Hull research. Some volunteers have gone on to become Justices of the Peace.

In 2008, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded the Hermes Programme 2nd prize in the contest *Experiences in Social Innovation* [6]. By 2009, the Hermes Programme had already “reached some 1,216,000 people in the school community” [5], and recently the number of contacts with the public has increased through a programme of public lectures: in February-June 2013 alone, 343,872 individuals attended Hermes talks on peaceful conflict resolution [2].

The Hermes programme operates in the poorest areas of 21 Colombian cities and surrounding zones. It works mainly with 12-17 year olds, and is eager to involve youngsters with violent backgrounds, either at home or at school. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund: “The most important impact of the Hermes Programme has been the consolidation of a conflict negotiation model with students and teachers as central actors in processes that operate based on respect for the skills and abilities of each individual. This strays from a completely different disciplinary model founded on the unquestioned authority of teachers and senior management. The model is built on a flexible basis and can therefore accommodate the specific characteristics of each educational institution, its students, communities and time” [6]. The “conflict negotiation model” mentioned in the quotation is a development of the one presented in Pinzón and Midgley (2000).

Further statistics on Hermes can be found in BCC (2013) [1], and a summary follows. Between 1 January 2008 and 30 June 2013, the number of schools participating in Hermes increased from 225 to 360. Between these same dates, over 2.75 million people participated in courses or public lectures. In addition, 106,574 community-based mediation sessions were run to address local conflicts. The number of mediation sessions has increased year on year, with over 17,000 taking place from February-June 2013 alone.

In 2011, a marketing organisation (Synovate Agencia de Investigación de Mercados) carried out an independent study of levels of satisfaction with the Hermes Programme among the educational community (including students, teachers and school administrative staff). 98% of students said that the programme was useful or very useful, and 98% also stated that the programme helped them to acquire skills to improve their interpersonal relationships with others. 94% of all respondents stated that the programme had produced improvements in their schools, and 99% said that they would want to participate in the programme again if they had the opportunity to do so [1]. Other independent studies also confirm these findings [2, 3, 4].

In 2011, the World Chambers Federation selected the Hermes Programme to be one of 5 finalists (out of 71 participants) in the World Chambers Competition under the category of Best Corporate Social Responsibility Project [1]. This competition “aims to encourage chambers everywhere to develop innovative projects that have a positive impact on their respective communities and that can potentially be adopted by other chambers around the world” [7].

All the above information can be independently corroborated by the Director of the Hermes Programme in Bogotá, Colombia [8].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. BCC (Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá) (2013). Programa de Métodos Alternativos de Solución de Conflictos en el Ámbito Escolar: Resumen Ejecutivo Programa para la Gestión del Conflicto Escolar “Hermes”. Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá, Bogotá.
2. Lacera-Rincón, MF (2013). Evaluación del Programa para la Gestión del Conflicto Escolar Hermes de la Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá. MSc in Industrial Engineering Research Project, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá.

3. Murcia-Pinilla, A and Rojas-Berrío, DF (2013). *Sobre el perdón y la justicia: Estudio y análisis estadístico de las principales variables de la propensión a perdonar y las tendencias retributivas y restaurativas en los colegios de Bogotá bajo un contexto de conflicto armado*. Industrial Engineering Undergrad Research Project, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá.
4. Orozco-Prieto, FE (2009). Evaluación del Programa para la Gestión del Conflicto Escolar (Hermes) de la Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá. Industrial Engineering Undergraduate Research Project, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá.
5. UNECLAC (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) (2010). Experiencias de Innovación Social América Latina y el Caribe. Retrieved on December 12, 2010, <http://www.cepal.org/dds/innovacionsocial/e/proyectos/co/hermes/default-i.htm>.
6. UNICEF (2009). The Hermes Programme for Conflict Management at School. UNICEF, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, República de Panamá.
7. World Chambers Federation (2011). World Chambers Competition finalists revealed. Retrieved on October 22, 2013, <http://www.iccwbo.org/News/Articles/2011/World-Chambers-Competition-finalists-revealed/>
8. Corroborating testimonial evidence can be obtained from the Director of the Hermes Programme.