

DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE SKILLS – THE COMMITTEE’S WORK PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

PIARC has included Human Resource Management in its work programme for the first time in recognition of the need for road administrations to address issues beyond those that are purely technical in nature. For success in road administration, countries need to have adequate staff resources and the Performance of Road Administrations Technical Committee has developed a work programme to give advice of best practice.

There are problems of the loss of knowledge and skill as experienced staff retire, unless they are adequately replaced. Also the requirements on staff are changing and will change faster in future as a result of new technology and requirements.

The Committee has a work programme which develops the concept of competencies to describe job requirements and also is seeking the latest ideas in education and training. Human Resources experts are assisting the Committee and a recent workshop will assist to define best practice in this area. Also, a questionnaire has been circulated to a selection of road administrations and a summary will be given of the responses received.

KEY WORDS

STAFF, COMPETENCIES, TRAINING.

1. THE ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee (TC 1.3) is one of four working in the area of PIARC strategic theme 1 - Governance and Management of the Road System.

Strategic theme 1 investigates the necessary measures to improve the governance and management of road administration in the provision of road systems in accordance with international best practice. This committee has been given the task of investigating three topic areas:

- measures to achieve more efficient management through the investigation of the governance and structure of road administration,
- development of human resources skills,
- and development and application of performance indicators of road administrations

The inclusion of the topic of human resources in the brief of the committee recognises the vital role of staff in achieving success for road administrations. The Committee has set up a separate work programme for this area and this is outlined below.

2. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee set up a small working group to develop a work programme on the human resources task, working in parallel with the working groups on the two other tasks listed above.

The group identified from members' own experience a range of human resources or staffing issues that were of particular concern. There are problems of the loss of knowledge and skill as experienced staff retire, unless they are adequately replaced. Also the requirements on staff are changing and will change faster in future as a result of new technology and requirements.

The working group decided that recommendations on best practice were required in two areas, competencies and education and training. Further detail is given in following sections of this paper.

The working group also identified a need to obtain information from a wider group of countries than those represented in the working group. It therefore developed a series of questions which have been included in a questionnaire being completed by road administrations during August and September 2005. Details of the questions are given below and the initial results will be available at the Warsaw Seminar.

3. COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a description of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that make a person suited or "competent" for their job. They should be developed from consideration of the road organisation's goals and reflect the way in which it sees its role developing in the future. To be useful for the organisation and its staff each competency needs to be clearly defined, with various levels described. Different levels will be appropriate to different jobs and can be included in position descriptions. This information will then be available for use in staff recruitment and assist in staff development, training and reward.

The working group decided that its strategy would be to "investigate - what are the competencies necessary to face the future challenges, identify what should be changed and/or introduced in education curriculum"

As a first step the working group obtained information on ways road administrations were using competencies currently. Information was obtained from United Kingdom, Flanders, Holland and New Zealand. This showed a strong trend towards behaviours that were customer oriented and output driven, together with a desire for a high level of technical knowledge. However the group is aware that this group of countries is not representative of all and intends to develop a more comprehensive survey and recommendations from the information to be obtained from the questionnaire. These results are to be presented grouped by the country's present stage of road administration development, and will later be supplemented by case studies that illustrate best practice.

4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The working group decided that its strategy in this area of investigation would be to “identify – new ideas and innovative methods introduced in the field of education and training in road and road transport (within the different contexts of developed and developing countries)”. The desired outputs would be recommendations on best practice.

The group carried out a literature review to identify existing work in this area. Substantial information was obtained, mostly relating to various capacity building projects in developing countries but the group found it difficult to reach any useful conclusions on best practice from this. It decided that this was an area where assistance was needed from specialists in human resource management.

An expert workshop has been arranged in Budapest on 15 and 16 September 2005 and committee members suggested suitable participants. Some 12 experts are expected to attend and will address four challenges that had been identified to assist with their deliberations. These covered issues of road organisations needing to become more customer responsive, the influence of technology redefining tasks and work time, the need for a partnership between operating managers and human resource professionals and the topic of recruitment. As this paper has been prepared before the workshop takes place there will be a separate presentation at the Warsaw Seminar on the conclusions reached by the experts.

5. QUESTIONNAIRE

The following five questions have been included in a combined questionnaire being completed by road administrations during August and September 2005.

F. Governance architecture: Human Resources

F1	Please indicate the proportion of the number of staff directly employed by your organisation requiring the following skills:	
	General management	<input type="text"/>
	Professional – engineering	<input type="text"/>
	Professional – Other (e.g. finance & economics)	<input type="text"/>
	Other professional or technical staff, please specify	<input type="text"/>
	Administrative	<input type="text"/>

F2	Human Resource Management		
Does your Road Administration set competence levels in recruiting and reviewing staff performance?	Yes A Little	Yes A Lot	No
When recruiting new professional staff does your Road Administration require applicants to have had their competence assessed by an outside organization?	Yes		No
Name of the organization:			
Do you assess competencies internally (with your own Human Resources specialists)	Yes		No
If YES - at what levels in the organization are these tools used? e.g. Professional/Management, Technical, Field Supervision, Driver/ Laborer			
Are there some competencies which you need and are having serious problems obtaining? Please list up to 5, in priority order.			
F3	Are there other types of competencies that you expect to be required much more in the future 5 years to meet expected challenges for your Administration (please list and explain how they relate to expected challenges)		

F4	Are there any changes to Training and Education curricula that you are encouraging in response to these needs? Please explain.		
F5	Do you have problems in carrying out your HRM policy?	Yes	No
If Yes, please give details.			

Initial results from analysis of the questionnaires will be presented at the Warsaw Seminar. It is expected that the answers to some of the questions will require follow up by the working group and will assist in deciding on candidates for case studies as part of the ongoing work programme.

6. FURTHER WORK

The committee is nearing the half way point in its work programme and will be reporting formally to the next Road Congress in Paris in 2007. Much work remains to be done and this paper has only been able to provide an introduction.

As the programme proceeds the Committee will be preparing papers on their work. These will be available on the PIARC website www.piarc.org or through a country’s committee member.