

Hundred and seventy-fifth session

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**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM PROCESS**

STAFF POLICY

ADDENDUM

SUMMARY

In conformity with item 2805.7 of the UNESCO Administrative Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its observations on the report by the Director-General.

Introduction

1. Relations between the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) and the Administration (Bureau of Human Resources Management, Sector for Administration and Central Services) are very cordial and it is clear that an atmosphere of dialogue has been established in the Secretariat. However, the matters that we raise are not always taken seriously and, above all, there is no real willingness to resolve them. For example, whenever STU draws attention to an administrative irregularity, HRM neither makes nor enforces any change, even after verifying the case. In one of the programme sectors, for instance, in a section in which there are two P-5s among others, the head of section is a P-4. This is an administrative aberration and an indirect way of awarding a promotion (which is imposed de facto) outside the statutory procedures. HRM has looked into the case, but for reasons unknown to us, there has been no follow-up.

2. Human resources are managed in such a way at UNESCO as to discourage any form of staff participation. Appearances are kept up, but the views of staff associations and even those of joint bodies are ignored as much as possible. The representatives of Member States no doubt have the impression that decisions relating to human resources management, particularly those concerning working conditions, are taken as part of a democratic process and they no doubt wonder why discontent among UNESCO staff is continuing to grow. The real reason is that the voice of the staff is heard but not respected.

Restructuring of the Education Sector

3. Staff in the Education Sector were surprised at the restructuring solution adopted by external consultants and the sector's senior managers. The structural logic, in relation to the programme approved by the General Conference and the Organization's mission in the area of education, remains very unclear to the staff.

4. With regard to human resources, the choices made in regard to the assignment or confirmation of responsibilities and the selection of staff who are supposed to strengthen certain field offices have been interpreted as measures based on personal considerations that are completely unrelated to the Organization's interests. Clarification has been requested, but the staff consider that no satisfactory explanation has yet been given, despite several meetings in which the Deputy Director-General, the Assistant Director-General for Education, the Director of HRM and other senior staff have taken part. The two staff associations strongly support the cause of colleagues whose field posting seems to be punishment rather than recognition of their professional excellence.

Recruitment and succession planning

5. Recruitment at UNESCO continues to be effected outside the written regulations. The procedure as a whole is respected only in appearance. Practically all advertised posts are earmarked for persons selected before the official assessment, which is arranged in such a way as to appear fair. Thus, there is no competition and the best or most deserving candidate has no chance of being selected. The same is true of succession planning for staff members nearing the statutory retirement age. When a post is about to fall vacant, it is "assigned", before any assessment has been carried out, to a person in conformity with criteria that are not always those stipulated in the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.

6. HRM no longer has the financial means to verify applications or assessments and members of the Advisory Board on Individual Personnel Matters (PAB) are not always afforded the necessary conditions (training, advice, time and information) to verify the fairness of the process.

Unfortunately, statements by observers from the two staff associations are only very rarely supported by HRM, which rules out one of the few opportunities for equitable judgement.

7. This state of affairs is a major obstacle to the career development of staff members and to the voluntary rotation of Professional staff. Such practices not only add to the personal frustration of staff members but also exacerbate the deprofessionalization of staff and result in more disputes in the workplace, which are two ongoing causes of the Secretariat's inefficiency.

Promotions and merit-based promotion

8. The same holds true for promotions through reclassification of posts. Personal relations between staff members and their hierarchical superiors and other non-statutory considerations govern such promotions. As promotion through application for a vacant post is uncertain and merit-based promotion has been suspended, career development opportunities are practically non-existent.

9. The Director-General announced the redefinition of the procedures for merit-based promotion on 15 November 2005 ("Prior to the reintroduction **next year** of the merit-based promotion system, which will apply to all staff, [...]"). At the beginning of September 2006, the Advisory Council on Personnel Policies (ACPP) had still not been involved in the consideration and formulation of the policy in question. This is just one example of the usurpation of the Council's statutory role and of the abuse of power that is turning ACPP into a rubber-stamping and controlled body, when the Council should be a think-tank on staff policies and a source of proper advice on the subject.

Training

10. Given that the opportunities for administrative "rewards" are limited by the lack of transparency as regards recruitment and promotion, training could offer some degree of satisfaction. However, in this area also, the real criteria applied correspond neither to programme requirements nor to the staff's personal expectations. While the objectives identified by HRM are interesting, real solutions have yet to be found in order to achieve those objectives.

Performance assessment

11. At the end of 2005, for the first time, the performance of UNESCO's staff was assessed using "PerfoWeb". This exercise has ended in more conflicts than usual. These misunderstandings are due to a number of factors, including, first and foremost, the fact that very few people (whether those assessed or the assessors) have understood the meaning and the scope of the exercise. Therefore, the first lesson that HRM should learn from this experience is that it is not enough simply to issue procedures and that a minimum of guidance is also required when introducing new human resources management principles. The most troubling factor is the attitude that performance assessment is the expression of some kind of power over subordinates. Assessment is therefore becoming an internal contract of subordination that did not form part of the procedure as originally envisaged and that should be eliminated through control mechanisms that are not yet operational.

HIV and AIDS prevention

12. A major effort has been undertaken at Headquarters in training on HIV and AIDS prevention in the workplace. The quality of the training provided by HRM, while indisputable and commendable, still falls short of the requisite standard. Since the matter is one that is highly sensitive in all cultures of the world, even among international civil servants, the message is still hardly being conveyed. The UNESCO Administration should have the courage to require the staff to be informed and to enable them to prevent infection or combat the virus and its complications, while respecting those suffering from the virus or from the disease.

Accountability in human resources management

13. Decentralization and the delegation of authority entailed, together with the complete lack of financial resources for human resources management, have created “no man’s land” situations in this area. It is very often the case that matters go unresolved because nobody assumes responsibility. The Deputy Director-General has held discussions with Headquarters staff members whose cases had been drawn to his attention by the staff associations. He has thus taken cognizance of the injustice that some have suffered, the hierarchy’s failure to act and, as he has often noted, the lack of initiative and responsibility among hierarchical superiors, who, despite being fully aware of the situation, do nothing to find a fair solution. While it is laudable that the highest appointed official of the Secretariat devotes time and energy to try to resolve individual cases, the procedure is nevertheless completely disproportionate and reveals the lack of genuine accountability in human resources management. At best, injustices are resolved, but disciplinary measures are never taken against those who should have avoided the situations in question or at least found upstream solutions.

Human resources management tools

14. These tools are very important and should raise efficiency; more hindsight is required to permit a fair assessment of their real impact on the quality of the Secretariat’s everyday work. The apparent improvisation in the application of the new tools does not augur well for positive results.