



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Hundred and seventy-seventh session

177 EX/6

Part I Add.2

PARIS, 8 October 2007
Original: French

Item 6 of the agenda

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

PART I

STAFF POLICY

ADDENDUM 2

SUMMARY

In accordance with Item 2805.7 of the Administrative Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) presents its observations on the report by the Director-General.

The UNESCO Staff Union (STU) notes with regret that certain decisions concerning staff policy are made without consultation of the staff associations. While in some cases a general opinion is requested, STU sometimes receives the information only when the Director-General's decisions have been published. This procedure is not only contrary to the ideals championed by the Organization since its founding and to the principles of basic democracy, but is also proof of ineffective management of human resources.

If the Executive Board intends to request the Director-General to continue implementation of the new human resources policies, while ensuring harmonization with the United Nations Common System, it might perhaps be useful to insist that such harmonization be carried out with due regard for the special features of the UNESCO Secretariat and, above all, with due regard for the rights of staff members and human dignity. With respect to the implementation of the medium- and long-term staffing strategy, it would be useful to clearly define actual staffing needs before continuing external recruitment.

The observations by STU on document 34 C/28 submitted to the Executive Board are contained herewith in the annex.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

ANNEX

General Conference
34th session, Paris 2007

Генеральная конференция
34-я сессия, Париж 2007 г.

Conférence générale
34^e session, Paris 2007

المؤتمر العام
الدورة الرابعة والثلاثون، باريس ٢٠٠٧

Conferencia General
34^a reunión, París 2007

大会
第三十四届会议，巴黎，2007

34 C

34 C/28 Add.
8 October 2007
Original: French

Item 11.1 of the provisional agenda

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

ADDENDUM

OBSERVATIONS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU) ON THE REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM PROCESS

PART I – STAFF POLICY

PART II – DECENTRALIZATION

OUTLINE

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

Section I Update on the human resources policy framework

1. During the Director-General's meeting with the staff in May 2007, Mr Matsuura, in reply to a question from the audience, said that the set of 10 new policies covering key human resources management areas was excellent, but that their implementation was inadequate. He added that that shortcoming was not the fault of the Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM), but of the Secretariat as a whole. The Director-General's assertion echoes many of STU's statements before the Executive Board and the General Conference, except that, unlike Mr Matsuura, STU includes HRM in "the staff as a whole".

2. Indeed, "decentralization of human resources management" means delegating the duties and responsibilities of HRM to the sectors/offices and providing them with the means and expertise to fulfil them. At the moment, the sectors/offices have neither the financial and human resources nor the requisite expertise to manage human resources properly. It is for that reason – and in the light of the many breaches and abuses noted in this field – that STU has for many years condemned, albeit in vain, the absence of management of human resources at UNESCO. As stated in the introduction to a 2004 administrative circular,¹ "The staff are the main asset of UNESCO": we ask then, that it be actually managed.

Performance assessment policy: implementation update

3. The United Nations' standard notwithstanding, it is shocking to note that almost at the end of 2007 the quality of the work of 23% of the staff members has not yet been assessed for the 2004-2005 biennium. Moreover, some staff have not even had their tasks defined in PEROWEB for that period. Yet, paragraph 7 of Administrative Circular No. 2205 on the performance assessment policy clearly stipulates that the policy "applies to all staff members at Headquarters and in the field". How then can nearly one quarter of the staff be excluded from it? And how can one speak under such circumstances of a "satisfactory" figure? Finally, a last but not least important question, how are supervisors who fail to apply the performance assessment policy approved by the Director-General being made accountable?

4. To the 23% of individuals not assessed should be added the growing number of those who have been working for years under various types of precarious contracts without having their performance assessed in any way.

5. PERFOWEB has given rise to many disputes over performance assessments, which demonstrates a very poor understanding of the new system on the part of both those being supervised and their supervisors.

Learning and development policy: implementation update

6. The report on the training policy emphasizes the importance of the allocated and spent budget, but provides no figures on the breakdown of these funds by sector/office, grade, gender or type of training given. Such statistics would nevertheless be useful. Moreover, at present, individuals who wish to acquire further training have to fight very hard to obtain the support (free time and funding) of their sector or office.

7. Apart from the language courses (partly paid for by staff members and, therefore, not compulsory or leading to a certificate), there is no assessment of the level of participants before or after training. This is a serious flaw. Lastly, the issue of the quality of the various training programmes for staff members has, unfortunately, not been addressed.

¹ Administrative Circular No. 2205 of 23 March 2004, p. 3.

Learning and development: evaluation of training programmes

8. It would be of particular interest to be informed of the methodology, results and measures planned following the evaluation of these different programmes carried out by the Internal Oversight Office (IOS).

Methodology for monitoring the impact of training activities on programme planning and implementation

9. It should be pointed out that HRM failed to involve staff representatives in the preparation of a systematic strategy and methodology for monitoring the impact of training activities on programme planning and implementation. We do not therefore have any information other than that contained in the document. Such information gives rise to the following comment: it seems that training requests are expected to be exclusively connected with the work done to that point. But what about individuals who wish to acquire training in order to prepare for a type of post that is different from the one they currently occupy? Such cases are not taken into consideration, even though it is a perfectly legitimate form of career advancement which could prove very useful to the Organization.

Policy on HIV and AIDS in the workplace

10. The courses proposed by HRM are remarkable simply because they exist; however STU is amazed that there is not one member of the UNESCO Medical Service among the trainers. Furthermore, these courses should be compulsory, better adapted to the cultural specificities of the participants, offered separately to men and women since the approach is not exactly the same for the two, and followed by practical ongoing information activities concerning this terrible virus and its spread.

11. Moreover, the support offered to HIV-positive individuals should be improved. In particular, a better guarantee of confidentiality should be given to the persons concerned. The Medical Service should outsource the treatment of infected cases. In fact, the Medical Service is part of HRM and also participates in the management of the Medical Benefits Fund (a twofold role that is unacceptable in itself) and therefore it should not have access to further information on the cases of colleagues who are HIV-positive.

Promotion policy: implementation update

12. The 33 cases of “advancement” within the framework of split-grade posts can be considered as promotion only from the financial point of view, as they do not involve any career advancement.

13. Moreover, even though the 11% of promotions for staff as a whole is in line with the practice in other United Nations agencies, it should be kept in mind that – owing to various excuses, especially the future implementation of a new merit-based promotion system, many members of staff have had no possibility of career advancement for nearly 10 years. Nothing proves that HRM is in a position to resolve the problem.

Promotion policy: proposal for a merit-based promotion programme

14. On 15 November 2005, on the occasion of a meeting with members of staff, the Director-General announced the re-introduction of the system of merit-based promotion in the following year (2006). The principal goal of this future policy was to give an exceptional and limited character to merit-based promotion.

15. Paragraph 16 of document 177 EX/6 clearly states that this system of merit-based promotion will be integrated into the performance assessment process. It is therefore vital to address the dysfunctions of that process; otherwise the merit-based promotion system will be biased from the beginning and be anything but equitable.

Ethics Programme

16. The new Standards of Conduct for international civil servants were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001. How is it that they were distributed at UNESCO only in 2007, six years later? It is to be hoped that they will be better applied and respected than the previous ones. We are also surprised that at a compulsory training session conducted by the Administration in reaction to the Education Sector scandal concerning the awarding of contracts, members of staff were instructed not to accept “gifts” beyond a certain value in exchange for a particular contract ... Lastly, a prerequisite for the establishment of the Ethics Programme is the strict and rigorous definition of the term “abuse”. Otherwise, the unfortunately inevitable result will be false accusations.

Section II Implementation of the medium- and long-term staffing strategy

17. Before establishing a staffing strategy, the professional profile of the staff that the Organization needs should be defined. At present, while encouraging continuous staff rotation, the Organization advertises vacant posts with very specific profiles and then expects the persons recruited to assume generalist responsibilities. Within the context of “Delivering as One”, the need for “generalists” might increase, but HRM does not yet seem to have taken this factor into account in its staffing strategy. The use of specialists to accomplish generalist tasks produces a great deal of frustration.

Review of staff resources of programme sectors

18. STU has previously stated its views on the actual reorganization of the Education and Culture Sectors, as well as the means by which this was carried out. It is all the more shocking to observe the wastage in the Education Sector, where enormous sums of money have been squandered, while the Culture Sector has been able to use its internal capabilities to streamline an ageing structure. The External Auditor emphasized the fact that it was not his mandate to assess the relevance of the Education Sector reorganization, but Member States should be looking with concern at the misleading way in which that sector is structured. We can only hope that the new ADG/ED will find ways to rectify the present state of affairs.

Allocation of staff resources to field offices

19. The reinforcement of staff resources in the field offices, in terms both of quality and quantity, is not simply a question of statistics. Too often, in practice, the alleged need to strengthen the resources of these offices is used to justify transferring staff members into the field, in order to disguise the real reason, which is to remove certain individuals from Paris who for a variety of reasons are considered to be undesirable. Moreover, the field offices are so dependent in both budgetary and conceptual terms that programme implementation is still decided at Headquarters level. It is also a matter of public knowledge that staff working in the field are more exposed to harassment, since nothing is being done to curb the despotic inclinations of the heads of certain offices. It should also be pointed out that the lack of job security – a state of affairs the Administration recognizes as serious – is not something that exists only at Headquarters; it is reaching critical levels in the field, where there is no system in place to ensure that the rights of local staff are respected. This dysfunction is giving rise to abuses, and there are a number of cases still unresolved involving the various factors mentioned here.

20. The most flagrant of these instances of abuse concerns the UNESCO Office in San José, Costa Rica, where for almost a year a group of colleagues has had to put up with repeated harassment by the Director including authoritarian behaviour, threats, ill-treatment, contempt, reprisals, arbitrary dismissal, denigration of people’s professional capabilities, the stirring up of ill feeling among colleagues, and a non-participatory and ruthless style of management. That manager even went so far as to threaten the President of STU, who, as she was elected to do,

attempted to assist her colleagues in restoring a minimum level of respect and fairness to the Office.

21. Another example of abuse of power, this time by a recently appointed Director who appears to be unaware of the rules of this Organization, is the UNESCO Office in Lima, Peru. Since this newcomer arrived, our colleagues, who have more than 10 years of experience in that Office behind them, have been treated with contempt, harassed and driven to resign. Impunity on the part of those in power, and trampling on the rights of those who are serving the ideals of UNESCO, seem to be part and parcel of the new staffing policy. The central UNESCO services concerned must take measures commensurate with the standing of our Organization to safeguard the integrity and dignity of our colleagues and ensure that they are treated with respect, wherever their place of work.

Review of support and administrative functions

22. To be truly effective, the Task Force should include one representative from each of the staff associations, which should be involved in planning programmes and policies from the start. That would allow them to draw attention to any flaws in or suggest improvements to programmes and policies before they are adopted and not after the fact, when it is too late.

Reinforcement of managerial capacity and accountability

23. STU notes with surprise that while 260 senior officials have been trained since 2002 with a view to improving management results, in June 2007 there were only 89 staff members at Director level and above. This means that no medium- or long-term projections were made and a significant number of people were trained for no reason; in other words, the money spent on them was literally thrown out the window.

Enhancement of the General Service category

24. While the competency framework for this staff category is due to be completed at the end of 2007, the staff associations have not been consulted on the matter. Once again, they can only voice their opinion after the fact.

Improvement of the geographical distribution and the gender balance

25. The balance among the various nationalities and between genders cannot be reduced to statistics, as the distribution of represented nationalities is noticeably unequal depending on whether the posts are managerial or operational. Similarly, the position of women in the Secretariat is not just a matter of numbers or even of post level. Too many women are still victims of harassment and too often mothers of young children are overtly excluded at the interview stage. At the same time, the options open to staff members for childcare are not only limited and very expensive, but owing to insufficient funding the children are cared for in conditions that fall far short of host country legal standards.

Recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff

26. For several years the rules for recruitment of staff have been so widely abused that the qualitative level of the Secretariat is falling dramatically. The arbitrary application of these rules has contributed greatly to demoralizing the staff. Respect for the rules at all levels, sanctions for proven abuses and real career development plans are the prerequisites for a motivating work environment. Unfortunately, none of these conditions is being met at the present time.

Recruitment trends

27. There is a total absence of rigour in UNESCO's approach to recruitment. It is considered to be a "private" issue. Most often the criteria applied have more to do with personal likes or dislikes,

or even less acceptable reasons, than with how effectively a particular programme could be implemented. HRM has not taken a single step to monitor or redress the situation, even when the staff associations have pointed out flagrant injustices and abuses.

Enhanced rotation and mobility

28. STU awaits with interest the conclusions of the External Auditor's examination of the implementation of the rotation policy. It reiterates its observations concerning the fact that compared to other United Nations specialized agencies, the UNESCO Secretariat is unique in having specialists in widely varied fields that are different from one another. Rotation cannot be conducted, as it is now, as if it were a question of systematically rotating generalists and specialists within a single field.

Diverse initiatives

29. While the updating of the Administrative Manual and the revision of many articles that are now outdated is a welcome initiative, it would be useful to know why the staff associations were not consulted as they should have been, when Volume II of the Manual was being prepared.

30. The introduction of the computerized management of staff leave (TULIP) is undoubtedly a step forward. Unfortunately, the system has been poorly designed because HRM and the sectors/offices no longer have control over leave requests, which only have to be approved by the staff member's supervisor, giving rise to much abuse (leave of more than six weeks, for example, or unrecorded absenteeism).

Decentralization

31. The staff associations were never invited to participate in the work of the Decentralization Review Task Force. They could have helped to design a more effective decentralization strategy, but once again they will have to be satisfied with commenting on the results.

32. One of the reasons that the two staff associations exist is to participate in the examination of any question involving the rights and obligations of staff members. It is regrettable that the present Administration does not always take this into account.