

Professional Standards

1. Introduction

Increasingly attempts are being made to encourage the trucking industries of developing countries to establish means of accreditation which can be used by qualifying operators to indicate to potential customers their ability to offer better quality services. A successful self-enforcing approach of this kind can increase the creditworthiness of operators to financing institutions by reducing investment risk --a vital consideration when the trucking industry is widely regarded as a high risk business-- and provides the practical basis in the longer term for incorporating effective professional standards into operator licensing and gaining support in the industry for enforcement efforts.

2. Approach to Accreditation

Accreditation involves setting standards of professional competence for those people involved in managing transport operations. This does not mean that owners of transport companies need to qualify, only the managers employed to carry out overall management duties. It covers basic knowledge of all aspects of running a transport undertaking:

- transport and business law,
- business and financial management,
- technical standards and operating practices,
- licensing,
- road safety
- international aspects (for operators engaged in international transport).

One approach to achieving professional standards would be to focus on regulatory tools such as operator licensing, which could include professional requirements in licence conditions. However this does nothing, in itself, to raise standards: if rigorously enforced it would result in barring most operators from continuing in business. In practice institutional constraints would make enforcement ineffective and so little would be achieved.

An alternative approach is to focus on encouraging transport operators to set their own professional standards. Even without supporting regulatory measures there are strong incentives for operators to achieve these professional standards, because it would help them to

- market their services more effectively to customers who want high quality services,
- increase their access to credit by improving their creditworthiness.

It is likely to take many years to raise professional standards, and transport operators will have to set out a long-term strategy for achieving this plus an achievable implementation plan to make the first steps. Account will have to be taken of the existing situation in the transport industry and allow experienced managers, or ones with a similar qualification in a transport institute, a different route to qualification compared to completely new unqualified managers. The method of examinations should also take account of literacy skills and allow managers with years of experience but limited writing ability to undergo oral examinations.

Once professional standards have been established by the transport industry, it is much easier for these standards to be incorporated into operator licence conditions if this can help set minimum safety standards for the whole industry.

The steps required to implement this approach include:

- 1) The transport industry and government should debate the need for improved professionalism and determine the skills gap. A first step would be to organize regional workshops for government to present policy initiatives and to invite feed-back.
- 2) Transport operators and freight forwarders should consider forming one or more associations who can represent their interests at government level more effectively than as a group of individual operators. (A model minutes of association are included below, which would give direction and ensure that the association represents the interests of members.)
- 3) The government should seek external assistance (finance and advice) to establish transport associations and support for training.
- 4) The associations take responsibility for defining standards and for providing industry-specific training. (An outline of the curriculum for management training is given below.)
- 5) The associations should affiliate with similar organizations in other more developed countries to gain information and advice on defining standards and setting up training and examination schemes. (In some cases there will be a federation of transport associations that can coordinate assistance, especially over defining standards of accreditation.)
- 6) The government should take responsibility for any basic educational matters that are involved in increasing professional standards. (e.g. Literacy standards may be low in some countries.)
- 7) The public and transport customers should be made aware of the professionalism goals of the transport industry and highlight those operators seeking or achieving higher professional standards (e.g. through the operators publishing a code of conduct).
- 8) In the case of the informal transport sector, it is unlikely that a high proportion of the operators would consider obtaining accreditation. For these people, short-term courses in practical management skills and simple tools are required and these could be organized by the transport association.
- 9) The government and transport industry should maintain regular dialogue, perhaps through round-table meetings, to discuss transport issues and policy developments.
- 10) When entering into international transport agreements, consideration should be given to adopting common standards for training, regulation, competency, data collection and enforcement.

11) The government should enter into a memorandum of understanding which requires relevant government agencies to consult with representatives of the transport industry before making legal or policy changes that might impact significantly on the industry.

3. Model Codes of Conduct for Road Transport Operators

One way for operator associations to promote higher professional standards is to define codes of conduct which must be observed by its members.

Under this approach, truck and bus operators would sign up to observing certain rules of behavior such as:

- 1) Planning operations to ensure legal, safety and environmental obligations,
- 2) monitor drivers' compliance with the code,
- 3) train drivers beyond the legal minimum,
- 4) ensure that vehicles are safe, well maintained and clean,
- 5) respect other road users and pedestrians,
- 6) require contractors and sub-contractors to follow the code,
- 7) respond in writing to complaints.

Significant failure by operators to operate in accordance with these rules could lead to their suspension from the association.

Specific codes of conduct or accords can be drawn up to guide relationships between consignors, carriers and consignees. Such accords set out clearly the general obligations of each party that enters into contractual agreements in the transport industry, highlighting areas in the law where conflicts may occur, such as over responsibility for loss or delay. The accords can be helpful in avoiding misunderstandings between parties and difficulties in executing transport contracts.

Implementing such schemes would require information to be disseminated not only to operators but also to drivers, customers and even the general public. An effective means of recording complaints from customers, road users and the public is required to enforce the defined standards. Examples of information used for implementing codes of conduct in the UK, may be obtained from operators' associations in that country (especially [the Freight Transport Association](#) and the [Road Haulage Association](#)).

4. Professional Training Needs

The following syllabus outline covers, in general terms, the main topics to be covered in professional accreditation training courses. Clearly the final choice of topics depends on local circumstances such as the form of legal framework and particular problems faced by operators. In particular specialised training is required for international operations.

Since people taking the course will be in full-time employment, the course would have to be modular and allow the topics to be covered over a long period of time. The course could be offered by training institutes, perhaps with international assistance from foreign organizations such as the Chartered Institute of Transport, transport associations or educational/training institutes.

Subject Area	Topics Covered
Road Transport Legislation	Operator licensing
	Driver licensing
	Divers hours regulations
	Traffic regulations
	Dangerous goods regulations
	Public service vehicle regulations
	Vehicle construction and use regulations
Road Transport Management	Management objectives and comparative advantage concepts
	Market analysis
	Vehicle selection
	Vehicle utilization
	Computerized and manual scheduling
	Use of computers in fleet management
	Traffic management
	Competitive tendering
	Negotiation and contracts
	Vehicle maintenance
	Facilities and staff planning
	Employment law and practices
	Defect reporting
	Fuel management
	Cost benefit analysis
	Accounting and budgeting
	Controlling expenditure
Risk management	
Health and safety issues	
Accident procedures	
Security	
Insurance	
Vehicle Engineering Management	Legal aspects
	Vehicle construction and use regulations
	Safety inspections
	Deriving a vehicle technical specification
	Use of statistics and analysis
	Current development in technology
	Workshop design and stores control
	Workshop and fitter performance measurement
Health and safety issues	
Workshop and vehicle costing and budgeting	