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### **Port Performance can be Improved Through Training**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

India has a coastline spanning 7516.6 kilometres forming one of the biggest peninsulas in the world . It is serviced by 13 major ports , 200 notified minor and intermediate ports . For the last few decades, the focus of the port sector has been mainly on technological advances that make productivity less dependent on human effort, knowledge and skills. But recent years have witnessed a growing acknowledgement by the port industry that appropriate attention must also turn to performance improvement through people. Ports should be seen as “socio-technical” systems because, in practice, operations in port terminals are carried out by a partnership between human beings and technology. This partnership, however, can only be successful if appropriate emphasis is given to Human Resource Management (HRM) and particularly the training component of HRM, an often overlooked area that can have a significant impact on port performance. This paper provides an outline of some basic concepts of the theory of training and education as related to the port industry and presents the port-related ILO Conventions, Recommendations, Codes of Practice, Guidelines and Manuals as well as training materials developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which aim in the improvement of cargo handling performance, the working conditions and practices and safety, status and welfare of women and men working in ports.

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**KEY WORDS:** Port Performance can be Improved Through Training

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The task of finding port personnel who either possess or have the potential to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable a port business to carry out the tasks necessary for the achievement of its aims and objectives is obviously of fundamental importance. Although the selection of port personnel is usually designed to recruit the most competent individuals, they are unlikely to remain competent for the whole of their career. As changes take place in technology, infrastructure, procedures, competition, interfaces with other modes of transport, knowledge and innovations, so too will the demands placed upon specific jobs in the port industry. Such changes may also lead to the creation of jobs and disciplines, which are new to the traditional port industry. This is where training comes in. However, the whole training process for performance improvement from start to finish is complex and to be effectively accomplished it requires an understanding of the nature and background theory of the process. It would therefore be useful to outline some basic concepts of the theory of training and education as related to the port industry, which have been taken into account by the ILO when developing its port-related training programmes. The following three chapters provide basic information in this respect and examples on how such basic concepts of the theory of training have been incorporated in the main port-related training programme offered by the ILO; namely, the Portworker Development Programme (PDP). Subsequent chapters provide an outline of all port-related training opportunities currently offered by the ILO.

Since the underlying premise of this conference is the improvement of port performance through people it is only fitting that the term “port performance” is firstly defined.

At organizational level **Port Performance** comprises the following three basic outputs:

*Effectiveness + Efficiency + Port personnel satisfaction*

Obtaining, employing and retaining suitable port personnel that would contribute to the effectiveness (accomplishment of explicit or implicit tasks) and the efficiency (best possible utilization of resources) of the port and at the same time portworkers to be satisfied with their work and their lives is costly and requires considerable effort. Therefore ports have a very strong vested interest in ensuring that these human resources are utilized as effectively as possible. There is convincing evidence that many ports are falling far short in making effective use of all the people they employ. To do this a port organization has to recognize that people are its most valuable asset, that they are not simply another factor of production for the achievement of short-term objectives. It should also be recognised that port personnel can become a reservoir of knowledge and skills, which must be nurtured and developed for the survival and

future growth of the port business in the constantly changing and increasingly complex port industry environment. Experience from some port organizations (a good example is that of PSA – Port of Singapore Authority) suggests that investments in people have resulted in substantial gains towards the achievement of the port’s strategic objectives.

There is no need to overemphasize the importance of “Getting the right people and getting the people right” but defining these twin concepts is a step further towards achieving increased port performance through people.

*“Getting the right people” means planned recruitment processes, which provide the port business with the best available talent, consistent with the needs of the port business and its capacity to make full use of those recruited.*

*“Getting the people right” implies consistent policies and practices in training, retraining, educating and developing port staff and involving them as “partners” in the port business rather than as functionaries whose roles are restricted to obeying instructions.*

It is obvious that “Getting the people right” implies two categories of human resource policies and practices. The first category is related to learning processes and the second to port personnel motivation. Despite the fact that port personnel motivation is highly important for improved port performance, it is beyond the scope of this paper and it will therefore not be covered. **However, it is important to point out that the provision of opportunities for appropriate training, education and development is one of the proven strategies for port workforce motivation.**

More often than not the terms “Training” and “Education” are used as synonyms and there is also some confusion as to what actually the term “Personal Development” implies. For this reason the first appropriate step in understanding the basic training theory upon which port workforce training should be best practiced is to highlight the definitions of these terms. The common denominator of these three terms is learning. Consequently, the understanding of the learning process is also a fundamental prerequisite for those responsible in “getting people right” in port organizations.

## 2. DEFINING TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

“Training”, “Education” and “Personal Development” are the basic activity areas of what is known as “**Human Resource Development**” (HRD). The term HRD was first used by Professor Leonard Nedler of George Washington University. He introduced the term at the Conference of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) held in Miami some 40 years ago. Professor Nedler defined **HRD** as “*the provision of organised **learning** experiences in a specified period of time, for the **possibility** of improving performance or general growth of individuals*”.

Let me elaborate on the key ideas in Nedler’s definition of HRD, which are *learning* and *possibility*.

### (a) *Learning*

HRD contributes to the productivity effort through learning. However, learning by itself will not guarantee increased performance. We can be certain that where learning is needed and not provided, increased performance will not be achieved. For example, if a new piece of port equipment is purchased and operators are not provided with the necessary learning experiences to operate the new port equipment efficiently, it is unlikely that the new equipment will result in increased productivity.

### (b) *Possibility*

It is important to note the significance of the word “possibility” as used in the definition of HRD. HRD practitioners avoid promising that learning alone will improve performance. All HRD can do is to provide learning, which could result in performance change.

Having defined HRD, which encompasses “Training”, “Education” and “Personal Development” the definitions of these three terms can follow. There is a plethora of definitions, which have been used to describe “Training”, “Education” and “Personal Development”, however not all clearly differentiate between these three terms. While all three activities (training, education, personal development) aim in effective performance through the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes, training is learning related to the present job of the learner, education is learning related to a future job of the learner and personal development is not job-related and relies more upon the individual’s initiative. The importance of using a simple, a clear and a comprehensive definition as a basis for practice is that it focuses attention on the aim of each one of these three HRD activities. On the basis of the above explanatory remarks the following are proposed as examples of appropriate definitions:

*Training is a learning process in which learning opportunities and experiences are designed and implemented, which aim in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the present job of the learner.*

Training is necessary to achieve improvements in work performance, particularly when ports invest in new equipment, introduce new work procedures or redesign the workplace. Training takes place at a specific time and place, is usually vocationally relevant and limited to specific aims and objectives.

There are many examples of this particular activity area of HRD either at port, enterprise, national or international level. Port training institutes all over the world offer on a routine or tailor made basis specific job-related training both at management (e.g. port operations management, port equipment planning, etc.) or at operational or technical level (e.g. operation of quay cranes, equipment maintenance, staffing/unstaffing of containers etc.).

### **3. CONCLUDING REMARK**

Appropriate importance should be assigned to performance improvement in the port sector through training. The understanding and correct application of the appropriate training theory provides the foundation for effective training in the port industry. The ILO, taking in to account the relevant training theory has developed appropriate port-related training materials and offers a wide range of training opportunities in the port sector, which aim in the improvement of the performance of ports, the working conditions and practices and safety, status and welfare of women and men working in the port sector. Indian Government has constituted Indian Ports Association (IPA ) under the supervision of Ministry of Shipping to oversee the functions of the Ports .The objectives of IPA are although several , basically it is a “ think-tank “ for the major ports .

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