

1st UNI-P&MS World Conference

Singapore, 21-23 August 2000

Priorities for future work

This world is full of talented, qualified and creative professionals and managers, women and men. They are eager to assume responsibility and use their capabilities to shape our world and common future. They want to develop freely and take responsibility for their own lives. They want to have a modern democracy in which both female and male citizens have the same rights and opportunities. They want partnership, equal opportunities, justice, participation and tolerance. In order to achieve this, the knowledge and experiences of both women and men should influence the economic and social decision-making processes.

The Committee for Professional and Managerial Staff forms a key feature of Union Network International (UNI). Activities aimed at organising and servicing professional and managerial staff have considerably grown over the past few years. However, there is still scope for expansion. All unions affiliated to UNI should be made aware of the work done by the UNI P&MS Committee, should be encouraged to participate in this work and develop policies to organise and service P&MS in their respective countries and areas of responsibility.

P&MS are a fast growing category of highly qualified employees in all sectors of the economy. P&MS are on the cutting edge of economic, technological and organisational change. They play a key role in companies, organisations and society. Although they perform functions with a high degree of responsibility, autonomy, and social and professional competence, they are employees. P&MS need trade unions and the trade union movement needs P&MS as members.

The UNI P&MS Committee covers virtually all the UNI sectors and plays an important role in co-ordinating and supporting trade union work for professionals and managers at world and regional level. The Committee develops and helps to implement policies that complement and extend national approaches. This includes identifying and analysing specific implications for P&MS of:

Global and regional economic trends, in particular the impact of regional economic and political integration;

Industrial and social change affecting management methods, quality of work and quality of life, education and further training, remuneration, mobility and equal opportunities;

Policies of international organisations such as the United Nations, ILO, ISO, WIPO, WTO, OECD, etc.

P&MS and the New Economy

The emerging New Economy, based on knowledge and ICT-networks, will be key to the everyday working life of more and more professional and managerial staff. The New Economy - the most important products of which are information, knowledge and ideas - is not limited to Internet-based e-business (internet-dot-coms) and ICT software and services production. The role of intangible goods in economy and society is expanding, and the New Economy includes growing parts of the services and traditional sectors.

The New Economy, in which more and more people will be doing work that amounts to converting data into knowledge, will be subject to different rules and principles than an economy that uses raw material, capital and labour to produce and trade.

The Conference acknowledges that the growth of the New Economy and the changes triggered by information and communication technologies will have a profound impact on society, corporate structures, work and trade unions. Professional and managerial staff are on the cutting edge of these revolutionary developments since they develop and implement

the new technologies and who first experience the effects.

The New Economy at regional and local levels

The New Economy does not develop in a uniform way at either global or national level. Today, certain countries are far ahead of others. Many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and even a number of European countries are trailing behind. But even at the level of nation states there are profound gaps between concentrated high-tech clusters with high productivity, prosperity and shortage of labour, and other areas with, low productivity and prosperity or even poverty and unemployment.

The Conference underlines that the ICT revolution opens new opportunities for economic growth and social development but also bears the risk of spreading the digital divide of the "knows and the know-nots". The emerging global knowledge-based economy will remain concentrated on certain areas of developed countries unless access to ICT, universal and affordable connectivity and ICT literacy is broadened to less developed areas and developing countries.

The Conference agrees with the UN Economic and Social Council that "market forces are fundamental but they alone will not suffice to put ICT in the service of development." The Conference joins the UN in its call for "effective and meaningful collaborative efforts" involving governmental and non-governmental organisations and the social partners "to enhance the developmental impact of ICT".

Managing knowledge in the knowledge economy

The New Economy has meant a shift in priorities and values in the corporate world. The growing interest in people as a corporate asset is a part of this shift in values. The performance of organisations today is based on their level of intellectual capacity, particularly their human resources. Since the value of the company depends on the competence of its employees they should also benefit from the increasing value through remuneration mechanisms. "Intellectual capital" is the collective reference to the intangible assets of an organisation, including knowledge, information, intellectual property and experience.

The Conference underlines that in today's markets knowledge and information have become the new tools of power. Organisations have to develop new, more effective management tools and they need to know how to measure knowledge, how to create it and how to convert it into value. Traditional financial management tools offer only a snapshot of an organisation's tangible book value at a given point in time. In the New Economy, organisations have to develop new tools to enable them to effectively manage knowledge.

Trade unions as training providers

Lifelong learning is essential. Trade unions should, through whatever means possible support and influence the development of lifelong learning. The Conference notes the broad array of trade union professional training and further education services offered to trade union members in general and to professional and managerial staff in particular. The Conference stresses that this type of service, including the use of new technology, distance and web-based learning tools, constitutes an important contribution, to implementing the principle of life-long learning and to supporting P&MS in their endeavour to keep their knowledge up to date. The Conference welcomes the synopsis of professional education provided by trade unions, prepared by the secretariat, and recommends that the P&MS Committee should follow up these initiatives by offering a platform for the exchange of experience and best practice and creating a network of unions active in providing professional training and education. This platform should be used more widely for managing knowledge by also covering issues of intellectual property, the role of the learning organisation and how we manage knowledge to bring order to information management.

Managing people in the knowledge economy

The Conference believes that there will be radical changes in the management of people in the New Economy with traditional hierarchy becoming obsolete, the sharp distinction between those who make decisions and those who carry them out will disappear. The system of orders, obedience and supervision is being replaced by post-industrial forms of co-operation, in which knowledge, individual and collective skills can more effectively reach their potential. Networks of much smaller units with greater autonomy are replacing functionally and hierarchically structured organisations.

Traditional supervisors and status symbols are disappearing. Knowledge workers, remunerated on the basis of performance, are themselves ensuring that they make optimal use of their efforts. They are tending to become "employee-entrepreneurs" who need coaches rather than superiors.

In addition, the balance of power between employees and companies is changing in the information economy. It is the employees on the cutting edge of the knowledge economy who own the decisive means of production: the knowledge in their own heads. Conference emphasises that success in the new economy means for management to act in the interests of all their employees and develop an enlightened corporate structure with possibilities for all employees to develop their full potential. Thus managing people in the knowledge economy means that employees have to come first, followed by customers, then shareholders.

Professional, social and ethical responsibility of P&MS

The Conference welcomes the UNI code of professional, social and ethical responsibility of P&MS and recommends its distribution and discussion at all levels of UNI. The code can be a valuable guide to knowledge workers, i.e. qualified professionals, managers and engineers who develop knowledge, new products, technology, work out marketing strategies and open up new markets. At times they might find themselves confronted with an "ethical dilemma" because their decisions influence the environment, working conditions and consumers. What seems to make economic sense on an individual level can, in the worst scenario, waste natural resources, damage the environment, destroy jobs or harm consumers.

The Conference is convinced that the trade union movement has a role to play in this area. The recognition of the "Principle of Responsibility" as a maxim for individual action is a step in the direction of environmental responsibility, socially tolerable technological development and ethical values in business life. Trade unions should encourage the professional, social and ethical responsibility of P&MS and support and advise their members. This should, however, in no way diminish the responsibilities of other parties, such as employers, shareholders and Governments.

Work/life balance in the knowledge economy

The Conference notes with concern that as new company models proliferate, forms of work and working time patterns are spreading that are still referred to as "atypical": part-time work, temporary work, limited contracts, telework, contract work and other forms of (pseudo) entrepreneurial work. In addition, with the enormous increase of information produced with ever more powerful IT systems, the quantity of raw materials and tasks that are created for other knowledge workers increases exponentially. Thus increasing productivity does not lead to shorter working time for many knowledge workers. On the contrary - it results in blurred boundaries between work and leisure time.

The Conference underlines the importance of new working time regimes to be developed and put in place for P&MS. The Conference stresses the importance of developing strategies to allow a better balance between professional and private life for P&MS. Tools such as the interactive CD-ROM on the promotion of work/life balance presented to the Conference are an excellent means of offering advice and raising awareness of the seriousness of this issue.

Organising P&MS in the knowledge economy

The Conference welcomes the UNI report on organising in the network economy, endorses the objectives and recommendations and stresses that organising P&MS is of paramount importance for the future of the trade union movement.

The Conference notes that increasing numbers of workers, especially professional and managerial staff, are finding themselves part of the New Economy. Most of them are not part of union structures, which are primarily based around "traditional economy" companies. To organise these groups effectively, new services need to be developed as well as new communication strategies, including e-mail and the Internet.

The Conference urges the P&MS Committee to put organising high on its working agenda and initiate an organising strategy that puts in place infrastructures, stimulates debate, encourages the sharing of best practice between affiliates, directs potential members to UNI affiliates and co-ordinates international organising campaigns.

Support for P&MS working abroad

The Conference notes that in the information economy, trade is possible across all boundaries. This applies not only to goods, but also to labour. Increasing numbers of workers are crossing borders to carry out their work. Work is becoming a commodity that can be redistributed at ever decreasing time intervals, a fact clearly demonstrated by the many worldwide Internet auctions of labour(ers). For activities where the location of workers is no longer important, boundaries, regulations and institutions at the national level are losing influence. Against this background there should be international recognition of P&MS qualifications.

Against the background of increasing mobility, the Conference welcomes the UNI Passport for P&MS as a valuable service for mobile P&MS and as a tool to organise them. The passport-programme allows union members to carry their union membership with them as a UNI Passport so that wherever they may be working in the world, then they will be able to get help and assistance on employment matters.

Priorities for future work of the UNI P&MS Committee

Having dealt with a number of issues relevant to P&MS, the 1st UNI PM&S Conference requests the UNI P&MS Committee to focus its future work on the following priorities:

Actively support the inauguration and consolidation of regional structures for P&MS; the Committee should help the regions to develop regional specific work programmes and action plans;

Continue to study the impact of the New Economy on professionals and managers, including "new professionals" and develop proposals, strategies and services with respect to all aspects of their career and employment needs. ;

Initiate a process of continuous monitoring of research in the field of intellectual capital and new forms of business performance measurement; create a web page to publish new developments and promote knowledge management by encouraging an exchange of information between affiliates and interested parties;

Provide a platform for exchange of experience and best practice to affiliates that offer professional training and education to P&MS and help them to eventually establish a network among themselves;

Promote the organisation of P&MS into trade unions with specific programmes for women and young people, stimulate debate, facilitate the sharing of best practice between affiliates, direct potential members to UNI affiliates and co-ordinates international organising campaigns;

Promote the passport for mobile P&MS, advise affiliates on how to handle practical problems, review experience gathered by affiliates with a view to updating and improving services accompanying the passport programme and publicising it on the UNI website;

Develop tools to raise awareness of the advantages of improving the work/life balance of P&MS in order to improve their quality of life, prevent burn-out and stress-related diseases and improve conditions for women to take up managerial functions;

Develop and consolidate a Global UNI Forum for Engineers by enabling interested organisations to co-ordinate activities and co-operate in the development and implementation of services for professional engineers;

Step up co-operation with the ILO, in particular with respect to safeguarding trade union rights for P&MS (specifically ILO Conventions 87 and 98), a follow up to the ILO Compendium for professional workers, the protection of service professionals following the deregulation initiatives for professional services by the OECD and WTO, and a follow up to the ILO tripartite conference for women in management: breaking through the glass ceiling;

Promote the code of professional, social and ethical responsibility of P&MS among affiliates and organise an exchange of experience concerning the practical implementation and application of the code at regional, national and corporate levels and as part of this process seek to continuously update the Code.

Singapore, 23 August 2000