



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Executive Board

Two hundred and fifth session

# 205 EX/5 Part III.C Add.

PARIS, 8 October 2018  
Original: French

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

## FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS

### PART III

#### MANAGEMENT ISSUES

#### ADDENDUM

#### COMMENTS BY THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

#### SUMMARY

#### C. Report on the implementation of the “Invest for Efficient Delivery” Plan

Pursuant to item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on human resources issues.

1. ISAU can only approve of the ambition to offer staff “opportunities to access the learning and development needed to enhance their skills, knowledge and abilities to carry out their functions effectively”. Nonetheless, though the intention is laudable, we find it problematic, because the only investment actually mentioned in the document is the financial cost of creating training modules, which are often purchased from outside suppliers. The document fails to take into account the cost of training in terms of time. It would be desirable to consider the practical framework under which staff will participate in these many modules. Currently, staff members must specify their learning targets in MyTalent. However, the current workload sometimes compels staff to choose between performing their duties and doing training (in which case, the only solution is to do training outside working hours). ISAU requests that Item 15.2, paragraph 8 of the Human Resources Manual, which stipulates that the managers of the Organization must “provide staff with the required time to learn”, be respected. When staff members are given time for training, they are often required to finance the



training themselves, which clearly shows a breach of the principle of equality among staff members who have such funds and those who do not.

2. Moreover, in general terms, we cannot fail to note a lack of communication on the workshops made available by the Organization. It should be ensured that information is not made available only to the Assistant Directors-General and heads of section, who then decide who may benefit from it. That purely and simply defies the principles of transparency and equality, which are, *a priori*, promoted by UNESCO.

3. Furthermore, the document does not mention the certification arrangements for these courses, or the way in which certificates will support the career development of staff. We know that, often, a member of staff is denied a post in favour of an external candidate with skills that are supposedly unavailable in the Secretariat. What guarantee is there that these new training courses will address such shortcomings? If it is a question of investing in the efficiency of the Organization, this efficiency depends first and foremost on its staff, who are asked to expend more efforts and take on new duties without objectively verifying (outside the tenuous self-assessments) the real gains of those efforts for the Organization, and without reflection on career advancement.

4. Finally, we question the competitiveness of these new in-house training modules in comparison to training available outside the Organization.

5. We dare suggest that in this new reflection on training, there is a risk of bureaucratic self-satisfaction, because the document emphasizes the implementation of means, not the achievement of tangible results. An example is fund mobilization, the measure of which cannot correspond to the number of training modules, but the achievement of a mobilization target. We must aim for efficiency, but to do so, we must demonstrate genuine ambition, which considers the expectations and needs of the persons implementing it. It is not enough to provide them with online training and hope that some kind of transformation will come of it.

## **ANNEX I – LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

### **Overall planning and next steps**

6. ISAU shares the Director-General's view on the need to offer staff “opportunities to access the learning and development” that would enable them to “enhance their skills, knowledge and abilities to carry out their functions effectively”.

7. We completely agree that such initiatives represent “a much-needed boost”. However, ISAU regrets “that the Organization has not benefitted from a systematic, corporate-level approach to learning and development since 2012”. It is an issue of crucial importance. We support the idea that we must “revitalize a learning culture”. However, we note that a learning culture is meaningless unless it is accompanied by a management culture that rewards effort and initiative. In an Organization where the External Auditor has recently found that staff evaluations had no influence on career development, it is unclear how the thousands of modules proposed will have any effect on the real motivation of staff members.

8. ISAU insists on the need to go beyond the creation of online learning modules and encourage initiatives aiming to organize other kinds of training.

9. ISAU notes that these different programmes aim to enable staff to access the skills needed within the Organization. We do, however, wonder whether an evaluation was conducted to establish these “appropriate skills”.

**Learning initiative 2: enhance professional competencies for programme delivery**

10. The availability of e-learning modules effectively enables staff to easily access training opportunities, particularly regarding interpersonal and communication skills. However, it is troubling to note that despite the increased use of these modules, only 1,400 out of 4,000 have been completed.

11. We can only insist on the importance of setting up workshops (especially for the development of interpersonal and communication skills), so that staff members can meet other colleagues and discuss their experiences with them. That would undeniably improve understanding and strengthen team cohesion and spirit. ISAU insists on the incentive effect of such modules and proposes that other drives for learning be set up (particularly regarding the time devoted to training and the consideration of certification in performance evaluations and career management).

**Learning initiative 3: strengthen the management and accountability culture**

12. ISAU favours the initiatives “to equip supervisors and managers with the tools to support the career management and mobility process”. However, the improvements expected through the three subjects broached (competency-based interviews, performance management and career-development conversations) can only take place in a favourable environment that takes performance into account. For that reason, ISAU supports a thorough reform of the performance management and evaluation system. Today, this system is a real minefield in its complexity. Many supervisors choose to “abandon” it entirely, thereby failing to evaluate staff sincerely, rather than initiate a process that will cause them to waste both time and energy.

13. Moreover, while supervisors and administrators are trained in competency-based interviews, these should be integrated into career management. Currently, that is still not the case, despite the fact that staff members massively support such interviews.