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TRAINING AND IMPROVEMENT OF PERSONNEL IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE,
ACCOUNTING AND COMMERCIAL FIELDS

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ACCOUNTING AND COMMERCIAL FIELDS

It seems that in numerous electricity establishments, the training of staff is primarily directed towards technicians, to meet, in effect, the need for production and distribution staff and to guarantee the continuity of service. Fortunately, the situation has changed and it is now believed that training and in particular further training should be provided for the entire staff of all establishments. The standardization of management and working methods, the development of better relations outside the establishments (customers, suppliers, administrations, etc.), the continued extension of services make it necessary to have highly qualified staff in the administrative, accounting and commercial fields.

Administrative and accounting fields

In the majority of cases efforts made within the establishments have been developed along the lines of training courses for administrative and accounting staff at supervisory and lower levels. In this respect - administrative and accounting training, eventually commercial - regional mains supervisors have often received special attention.

Moreover, some African employees have been admitted to certain courses organized by Electricité de France in schools established for its own staff. However, it does not appear that these courses are suitable for the specific conditions which obtain in African establishments.

At present, establishments should be able to lay down guidelines for local training which would cover mainly:

- training courses for administrative staff;
- training courses for accounting staff;
- training courses for supply and marketing staff;
- training courses for section heads "purchasing - stores";
- training courses for administrative staff suitable for promotion, or for those recently promoted to supervisory level;
- correspondence courses; and
- eventually, training courses in special technical subjects, for example the use of acquisition of professional skills connected with computers.

Administrative staff

Training would be directed to supervisory staff, in some cases lower level staff having some experience in administrative work and holding qualifications of the standard of the Brevet élémentaire du premier cycle (O' level).

The programme would consist mainly of:

- language courses (English or French), law, fiscal procedure and labour legislation;
- practical exercises and courses on administrative practice and instruction in accountancy; and
- technological briefing sessions on the equipment in use in production.

Accounting staff

As in the case of administrative staff, the courses would be geared to the needs of supervisory staff or their subordinates who have already had some professional experience.

The programme would consist mainly of:

- language courses, law, fiscal procedure, labour legislation;
- practical exercises and courses to provide staff with training in accounting and accounting analysis, with complementary courses on administrative practice; and
- technological briefing sessions on the equipment in use in production.

Supply and marketing staff

The courses would be intended for supervisory staff and, in special cases, their subordinates who have some professional experience. They would consist mainly of:

- practical exercises and courses concerned with supply, accounting, commerce and law;
- language courses to train staff in the drafting of minutes and reports; and
- technological briefing sessions on the equipment.

Section heads (purchasing - stores)

These courses will aim at providing supplementary training for section heads "purchasing - stores" - or staff of similar rank - so as to reduce costs.

This programme would deal mainly with the analysis of duties assigned to one section, the purchases-stores division-stock control, purchasing of equipment, relations with suppliers, independent contractors and consumers.

Staff recently promoted to supervisory level

The main objective of the course programme would be to make the staff members aware of the role of supervisory staff.

It would consist mainly of:

- additional professional and general knowledge of accounting, personnel management, customer control, stores control, law, electricity rates, fiscal procedure, training in written and oral forms of expression;
- information on organizational problems (forecasting, work preparation, simplification and control), filing and communications; and
- introduction to electrical engineering.

Correspondence courses

Experience acquired in this field by the Electricité de France has shown that the organization of introductory courses in administrative and accounting methods could usefully be provided, for employees and supervisors, in the following subjects:

- introduction to accounting: accounting, accounting analysis, inventory taking, accounting systems, etc.;
- applied accountancy for establishments producing and distributing electricity: accounting analysis, wages and salaries, sales, suppliers, stores, staff contributions, capitalization, management-accounting relations;
- general information on commercial problems of electricity establishments: law of electricity supply, legal relations with third parties, main uses of electricity, sales promotion, standardization of equipment, rates, etc.; and
- general course on the labour code.

Commercial field

The need for training and further training in this field seems to be felt by the majority of establishments.

Such training should normally be provided for senior, supervisory and even operating staff.

- At senior staff level a distinction should be made between:

- the commercial training of senior staff;
- the training of staff responsible for providing commercial training; and
- further commercial training for senior staff.

- At supervisory and operating staff level, training should deal mainly with the training of commercial instructors (decentralized) and the organization of specialized training courses.

Naturally, all these courses should correspond to the duties assigned to the staff. Moreover, they should be subject to continual adjustment in accordance with changes in commercial and marketing practice, competitive equipment, customer reactions, the commercial policy and rates of other establishments.

Training of supervisory staff

Training at this level would deal with:

- commercial techniques (marketing);
- uses of electricity (industrial, agricultural and artisanal); and
- the study of problems from the technico-economic point of view.

In addition, senior staff responsible for training activities or commercial training should follow courses dealing with communications, human relations and introductory teaching methods.

Commercial training - or commercial information - provided for specialized staff should deal with the following subjects:

- modern commercial functions;
- commercial management - management and marketing;
- training for the commercial managers;
- market analysis and commercial activities; and
- knowledge of customers and the economic situation.

Training for supervisory staff

The organization of decentralized training can be made possible by training commercial instructors.

They could be trained in teaching and commercial methods which would make it possible for them to provide commercial training for all staff in contact with the public and if necessary to organize meetings for professional staff.

Means

Training of staff in the administrative, accounting and commercial fields require elaborate means suited to the specific objectives of African establishments. It would seem that up to now all the establishments have not yet acquired the means necessary for carrying out a complete co-ordinated programme in this respect.

Such training cannot be efficiently developed without the permanent co-operation of the senior staff, professional and supervisory, and without the help of essential documentation and audio-visual aids to supplement active teaching methods.

It would, therefore, be worthwhile finding regional solutions for the establishments:

- the training of the instructors (professional and supervisory staff);
- the preparation and adjustment of programmes in the various subjects;
- the preparation of the necessary modern audio-visual aids; and
- the preparation - or adjustment - of specialized correspondence courses.

Recommendation

An exchange of views on the methods in use by the establishments in the above-mentioned fields as well as on suggestions concerning their development and improvement would be of some advantage.