

Priorities in improving road maintenance overseas: a check-list for project assessment

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The Authors stress the need for a correct balance between institutional, managerial and technical capabilities to sustain a successful road maintenance organization. Based on my experience in Lesotho and Mozambique, I have some observations to make on the training necessary to create such managerial and technical capabilities.

49. One of the causes of the shortage of engineering skills in developing countries can be found in Table 1, which summarizes the lack of any technology transfer in the majority of construction or rehabilitation contracts overseas. The principles which govern engineering education differ little from those which apply in the UK; the most important principle is the need for supervised work experience in positions of gradually increasing responsibility, with successes and failures being duly acknowledged. The incorporation of a significant training element into contracts will incur a cost penalty, but it must be recognized as reducing subsequent expenditure on training.

50. The Authors note that systems adopted to control maintenance schemes often collapse following the departure of their expatriate initiators. The full involvement of local engineers in the creation of such systems is essential for the systems to have any hope of success. A system's degree of sophistication must also be limited to that which is really necessary.

51. It must be recognized that workers on technical assistance programmes require not only engineering skills, but also an accurate analysis and understanding of the organization to be assisted, together with a sensitivity towards the problems, needs and aspirations of those they are assisting.

Dr Robinson and Mr O'Sullivan

We would agree with all the points raised by Mr Markland.