

## Report 37

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### **Concretization of Switzerland's Two-phase Driver Training Model**

#### **Summary**

In all industrialized countries road accidents are the most common cause of death of young people between the ages of 16 and 25. In view of this, the necessity to introduce additional measures aimed at reducing the number of accidents is undisputed.

In papers published on the subject one can find both univariate and multivariate approaches towards explaining the increased accident-proneness of young road users. All agree that the youthfulness factor plays a much more important part in the cause of accidents than the inexperience factor. The increased threat to young people becomes more understandable if one looks more closely at their development-specific motivational backgrounds. One is dealing with an especially difficult phase in their lives, during which it is necessary for them to release tensions and discover their own limits. Driving a car represents an opportunity to react to such a state of tension and to find out how far one can go. However, in multivariate approaches various authors came to the conclusion that not all young people are vulnerable to the same extent, but that there are certain groups that are especially at risk. These groups are characterized by a special type of lifestyle.

Experience with various driver training systems in other countries led to the judgement that a preventive approach that is applied selectively (i.e. measures that are not aimed at all new drivers but only become effective if the law is broken) have not proved satisfactory. For the second phase of acquiring a driving licence, in particular, it seems appropriate to link training to the imposition of conditions, i.e. on the one hand to arrange for the process of gaining experience that follows the driving test to be accompanied by restrictions and conditions and, on the other, to deliberately set in motion learning processes and enable active experience formation. Practical instruction units that only deal with purely technical behaviour – overcoming danger – have been shown to have negative effects on risk-taking behaviour because they are followed by a greater feeling of safety, causing risky behaviour to become more frequent.

In Switzerland practical training for car drivers is not mandatory. Since 1.1.1993 both car drivers and motorcyclists must attend 8 lessons in driving theory. After passing the driving test, the driving licence is issued for an indefinite period. In 1996 the Federal Department of Justice and Police passed the draft revision of the Road Traffic Act into the opinion-gathering phase. This draft bill includes the introduction of 2-phase driver training linked to a period of probation. A group of experts commissioned by the principal road traffic Division (today part of the Federal Office of Highways) proposed that the probationary period should last for 3 years and that, during it, novice drivers should be required to attend obligatory further-training courses. Whoever contravenes the road traffic regulations during this period in such a way as to endanger other road users would be required to submit to further training. Whoever offends a second time would be required to start the probationary period again (i.e. at the point of acquisition of the provisional driving licence). Those who complete the probationary period without contravening the regulations and have attended the requisite further-training courses would receive the full driving licence for an indefinite period. The total duration of the further-training course should be 16 hours, split into three self-contained parts.

The aim of the project introduced here is to draw up concrete specifications for the further-training modules. These firm specifications were based on the current state of knowledge concerning the causes of accidents and the behaviour of young people, as well as on experience with various training models in other countries. Furthermore, young novice drivers were surveyed orally and in writing

concerning their driving training, their driving experience to date and what they would like to see included under training.

The acquisition of the experiences and opinions of the young novice drivers concerned was effected by means of semi-standard interviews and a survey in writing. The interview findings provided the basis for the design of the self-contained questionnaire. This questionnaire was sent to 1,150 young novice drivers in the German-speaking and French-speaking parts of Switzerland. The recipients had been in possession of a driving licence for a car or motorcycle for between 6 and 12 months. There was a 53.5% response to the questionnaire. Cinema vouchers were used as a reward.

The results of the surveys clearly point to the fact that further training during the phase following the driving test is urgently necessary. This is due both to the high number of critical events that the young novice drivers mentioned as occurring when they started to drive on their own, and to the causes to which these events were attributed by them, which allows the conclusion that their attitudes are not very self-critical.

The necessity for training that promotes road sense is accepted by a large section of the young novice drivers. However, those who had reached a higher educational level were significantly less convinced and didn't see the benefit of such training as immediately as the semi-skilled or unskilled respondents. All in all, the comments on the 2-phase model were rather sobering. The associated cost, in particular, was an important factor in acceptance. As a whole, the comments showed that one must reckon on encountering considerable motivational difficulties. Practical driving courses, in particular anti-skid courses, attracted most support as a further-training method. This confirms a trend that is also apparent on voluntary further-training courses. Car drivers wish for an action-oriented form of further training. Theoretical instruction tends to be considered boring and useless.

In creating an obligatory further-training course there is thus the problem that precisely the form of further training is being favoured for young novice drivers – who have a distinct preference for track training – which leads to an increase in the feeling of safety and which can thus go hand in hand with a higher danger level after attending the course. This therefore presents the difficult pedagogic task of designing a course that on the one hand accommodates the needs of the young people by including practical driving elements, whereas on the other hand it should contain – from a psychological viewpoint more significant – emotional and motivational components that are given comparatively more significance.

The objective of further-training courses is to improve the social responsibility of young people and to promote awareness of their own behaviour. It should therefore result in greater road safety,

- by improving danger cognition (perception, recognition and evaluation of danger);
- by self-reflection on their own motives;
- by encouraging empathy and the ability to communicate;
- by reducing the exposure to danger.

It is proposed to introduce three modules, each lasting for a total of 5 hours. The course modules are independent of each other so that they can be attended in any order. A two-person team will present each of the three modules. A specialist with psychological and pedagogic training and a specially trained traffic instructor (usually a highly-qualified driving instructor) will work together. Only in this way will it be possible to set the required complex psychological processes in motion. Class sizes should be limited to 10 or 12 persons, at the most.

Ideally, the premises where the courses are held should enable work and discussion to take place in small groups. The practical driving exercises require a large car park or a route that must be driven for exercise and observation purposes. Participants must provide their own vehicle for the training

course.

Each of the three modules is dedicated to a subject that is connected with the high danger level faced by the young novice driver. The following main subject areas are proposed: speed (risk), concomitant circumstances and night-driving (alcohol). The structure of the modules is always the same. A motivational opening and a definition of the conditions of the collaboration are followed by a personal-experience or self-awareness section where the emphasis is on action. Experiences are then discussed in the group and on an individual basis, and the participants are urged to practise self-reflection. Each course module thus contains a practical driving section, a cognitive section and a socio-motivational section. In principle, more emphasis is put on emotional and motivational subject matter than on cognitive elements. When dealing with the emotional and motivational subject matter the procedure must always involve moving from the general – affecting everybody – to the specific – affecting the individual course participant – in order to avoid resistance. To increase acceptance, one must perhaps consider at least partial public funding of the cost of these courses.

Working in groups and self-awareness questionnaires are the communication methods that were chosen for exerting emotional and motivational influence. As far as possible, frontal instruction is replaced by instructional discussion. Cognitive subject matter is backed up wherever possible by personal experience. In the case of the practical driving elements, it is necessary to ensure that the feeling of security is not enhanced by practising to the point of perfection. Rather, the practical driving section serves as the main attraction of the course and makes it easier to get into the social and motivational subject matter.

The pilot experiment proved to be successful for both presenters and course participants. Evaluation showed that the important objectives had been met using the proposed course type, that the participants felt they had been taken seriously, and were considering a behavioural change.

The proposed course type was tested using the course module „speed/risk“ – summarized in the following table – in a test run with 12 participants (p. 132 ).

Part	Subject matter	Presenter	Duration
<b>Motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conditions of the collaboration</li> <li>• course timing</li> <li>• getting to know one another by means of interaction game</li> </ul>	Educational sociologist Driving instructor	25 minutes
<b>Emotional-motivational part (personal)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-observation sheet (speed and risk)</li> </ul>	Educational sociologist	20 minutes
<b>Driving experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduction to practical training + movement</li> <li>• braking exercises</li> </ul>	Driving instructor	60 minutes
<b>Cognitive part</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• audio-visual knowledge test</li> <li>• test solution with explanations</li> </ul>	Driving instructor	45 minutes
<b>Break (lunch or evening meal)</b>			75 minutes
<b>Emotional-motivational part (general)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interaction game</li> <li>• brainstorming (reasons for</li> </ul>	Educational sociologist	40 minutes

	driving too fast) • summary of the reasons (entire class)		
<b>Driving experience</b>	• introduction to practical training + movement • practical driving exercises (experiencing practical strategies)	Driving instructor	60 minutes
<b>Emotional-motivational part (personal)</b>	• working in small groups (avoidance strategies) • summary of strategies (entire class) • individual evaluation of sociopedagogic test, drawing up profile • implementing the knowledge gained, developing own strategies	Educational sociologist	70 minutes
<b>Evaluation of course</b>	• evaluation questionnaire • discussion	Ed. sociologist Driving inst.	15 minutes