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PICARD STANDARDS VS. WORLD-CLASS CUSTOMS REQUIREMENTS

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Abstract

This paper was presented at the Inaugural INCU Global Conference “Trade Facilitation Post-Bali: Putting Policy into Practice” 21–23 May 2014 in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan. The article deals with definition of world-class professional profile required for the customs officials. The authors highlight the PICARD Standards and the questionnaire, based on these standards, the principles of the CATT tool. The article also describes the Performance Indicators for Customs Administration (PMI) of the Inter-American development Bank and the proposals of the Tuning project, which is one of the greatest program involved with higher educational structures in Europe, focused on competencies and skills that enhance the best professional performance. The authors present the results of the interview concerning this issue to all WTO members in 3 languages. In conclusion, the authors evaluate the obtained results and give their opinions of the analyzed issue.

Key words: PICARD; Customs Assessment Trade Toolkit (CATT); Tuning project.

Introduction

During the last 30 years, the tasks and activities of the customs collaborators has been changed responding to the globalization processes and the requirements of professionalization within this profession, issues that moves the administrations to include well prepared coworkers in different areas. Training and specific preparation, complemented with the appropriate skills, knowledge and characteristics, are key aspects in the current customs professional's profile.

PICARD Standards are a clear response from the WCO member's needs, regarding the professional profile required from the customs collaborators. These standards propose a series of characteristics and skills that the professional profile may have, focused in providing the professional with the tools to be leaders and change managers.

World customs not only requires talented collaborators, but also organizations with proper performance and development; This is why, in recent years, the custom world-class concept has caught the interest of several international organizations, which have been given the task of distinguishing the elements that encourage the proper management of customs and to establish possible performance indicators as guidance.

On the customs world-class definition, is important to emphasize the participation of the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), actors who have developed interest at measuring the performance of customs tools such as “The Custom Assessment Trade Toolkit (CATT)”.

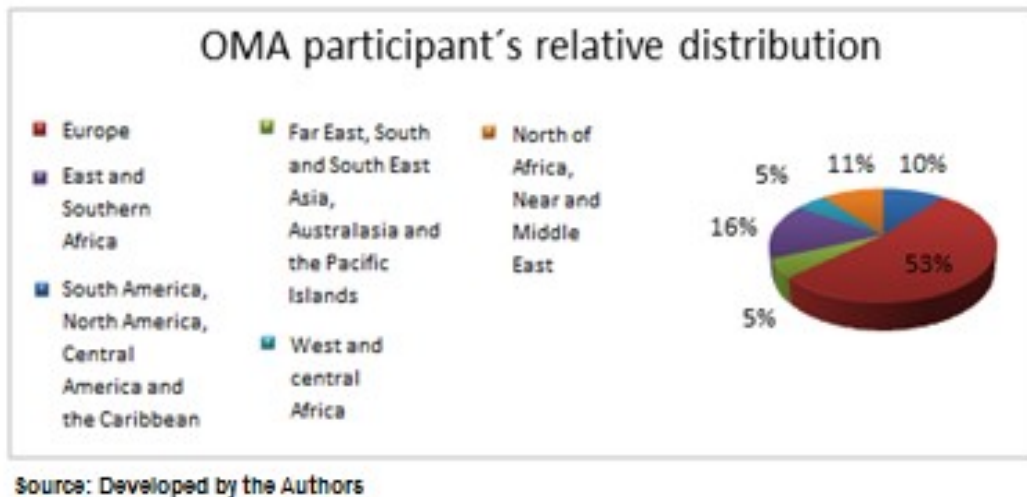
Gathering the need of keeping the customs employees properly trained and prepared, also the need of having customs that reach the goal of be and react as world-class customs, the University of Costa Rica, in collaboration to the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the INCU, has lead a research oriented to evaluate if the current PICARD standards fulfill the world-class custom requirements.

To achieve the main objective, the researchers developed a questionnaire, based on the PICARD standards, the principles of the CATT tool, the Performance Indicators for Customs Administration (PMI) of the Inter-American development Bank and the proposals of the Tuning project, which is one of the greatest program involved with higher educational structures in Europe, focused on competencies and skills that enhance the best professional performance, since 2000.

Questions present scales of responds that goes from 1 to 4, where 1 represented disagree and 4 completely agree, once data was collected and analyzed, the results were presented with the media and relative numbers.

This questionnaire was shared electronically in English, French and Spanish to all WTO members.

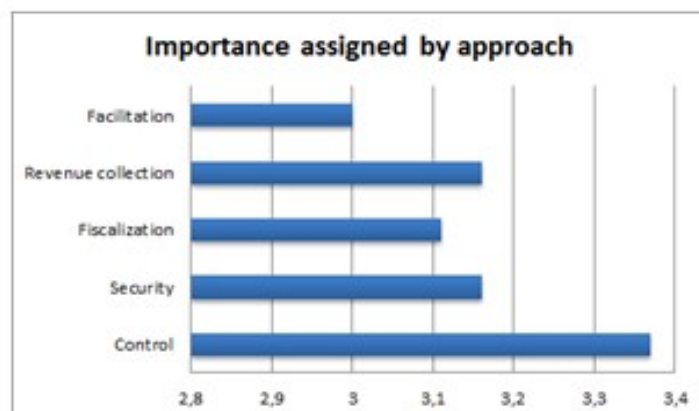
Figure 1. OMA participant’s relative distribution



The population that participated fulfilling the questionnaire, presented characteristics such as: The majority of the participants correspond to Europe region and additionally in terms of

hierarchical levels the answered questionnaires belong to participants from the management and middle management.

Figure 2. Importance assigned by approach

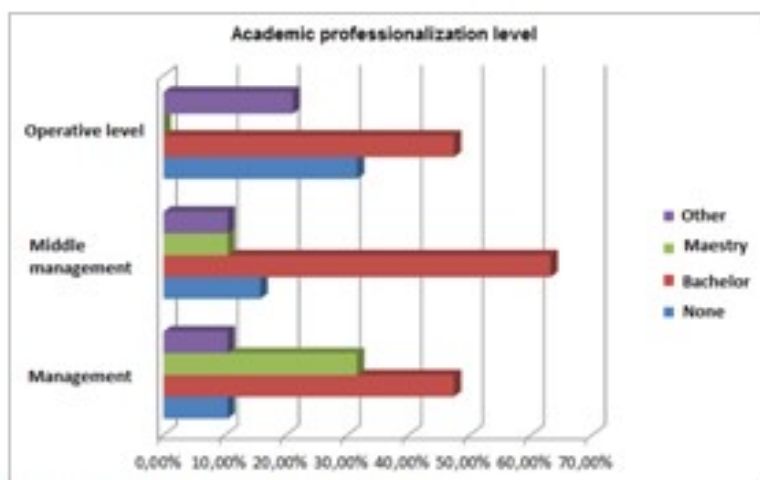


Source: Developed by the Authors

One of the main questions was oriented to identify if there is a predominant custom approach on the administrations that may influence the professional profile required. The results show that control, security and revenue collection are the ones with best identification among the participants.

The participants also identified the kind of professionalization required by hierarchical level within their administrations, where management and middle management were related with grades such as bachelor and master degrees.

Figure 3. Academic professionalization level



Source: Developed by the Authors

In order to identify how the customs are organized and if this organization responds to the world-class customs proposals, the participants were encouraged to state if there are different departments within in their administration structure.

The high rates obtained for the administration and information technology departments, indicate that these departments are considered essential in improving the activities and development in the customs system, this in accordance with the CATT's principles;

Figure 4. Organizational departments customs distribution



Source: Developed by the Authors

However additionally to the suggested areas, the participants pointed out the existence of specific customs departments in their administration, such as the anti-drug, laboratory, internal audit, training, security, internal taxes, risk, verification, fraud and monitoring, all these departments respond to the particular needs of their customs.

Figure 5. Mean organization capabilities distribution



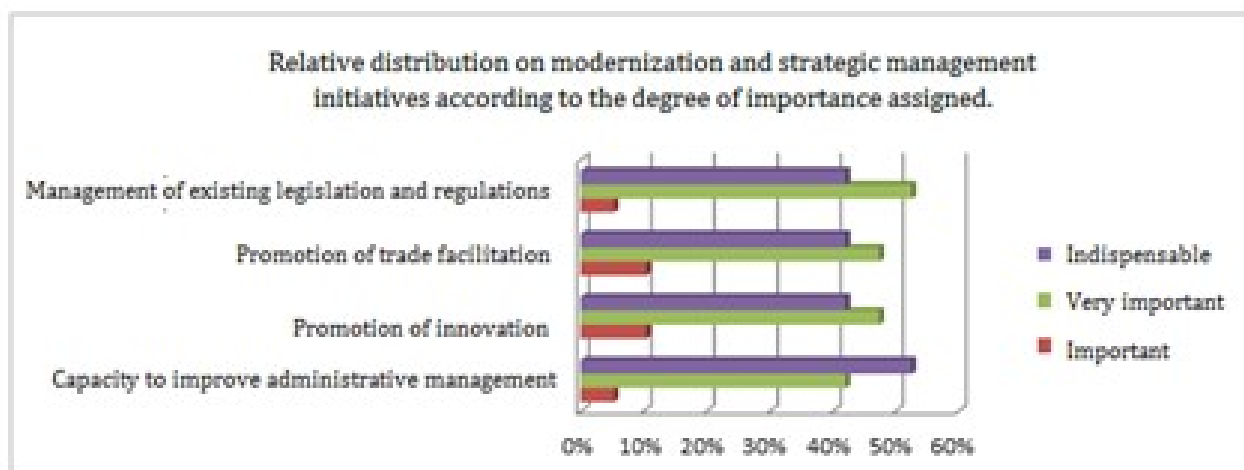
Source: Developed by the Authors

Departing of the premise that the administrations count with a basic organizational structure that allow them to develop their activities, and with the aim to identify the professional profile according with the world customs needs, the research invited the participants to evaluate the grade of concordance with organizational capabilities, skills, abilities and knowledge as promoters of the best customs performance.

Regarding the organizational capabilities and the way they improve customs development, the results obtained shows that the participants evaluated the proposals positively, except on proposal concerning to project management. At this point is important to note that on average the operational level received more negative responses than middle management and management.

Additionally, the respondents were asked to provide the degree of importance assigned to management initiatives and strategic modernization initiatives proposed in the CATT's context. The trend of results indicates that respondents consider initiatives very important and indispensable, reflecting that administrations agree on the need to implement these initiatives for efficient and effective management of their customs. These features and those analyzed in the previous questioning, should therefore correspond to professional profile to customs officials to achieve status of world-class customs.

Figure 6. Relative distribution on modernization and strategic management initiatives according to the degree of importance assigned



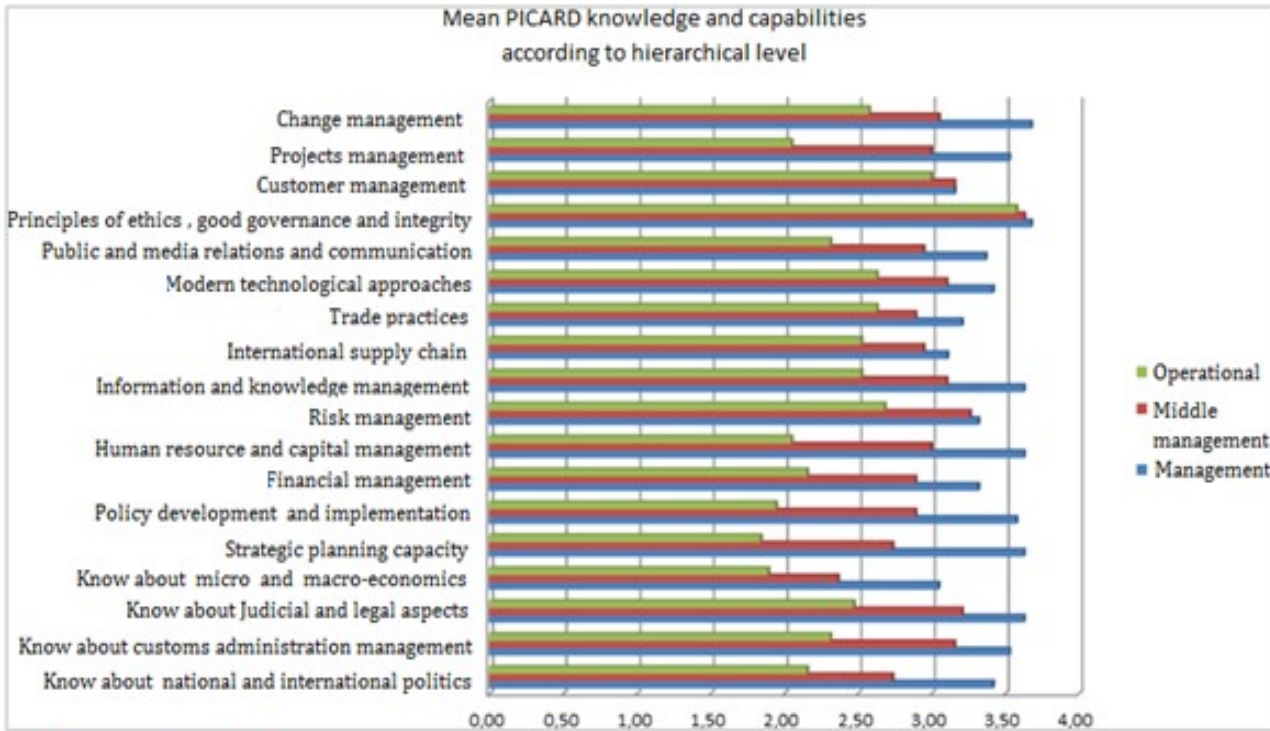
Source: Developed by the Authors

Given that the authorities are consistent in stating that, for their customs is important and convenient to implement initiatives that encourage efficient and effective management and that the employees have the right skills and characteristics and this is one of the principal means to achieve this goal, the researchers presented to the respondents the PICARD proposals, in order to assess the degree of importance assigned to them, taking into account the three hierarchical levels and thus allowing to reveal the needs of the professional profile of customs professional.

In response to the previous approach, the participation of respondents, depending on the level of importance assigned and hierarchical level reveals that more positive responses to the trend are obtained for the management level, followed by the middle management level and finally the operational. At this level the average in terms of importance assigned are located near the

negative pole prone to irrelevant for the options: *meet micro and macroeconomics, strategic planning, policy implementation and the ability of human resource management and capital*, detailed data is presented in the next graphic.

Figure 7. Mean PICARD knowledge and capabilities according to hierarchical level



Source: Developed by the Authors

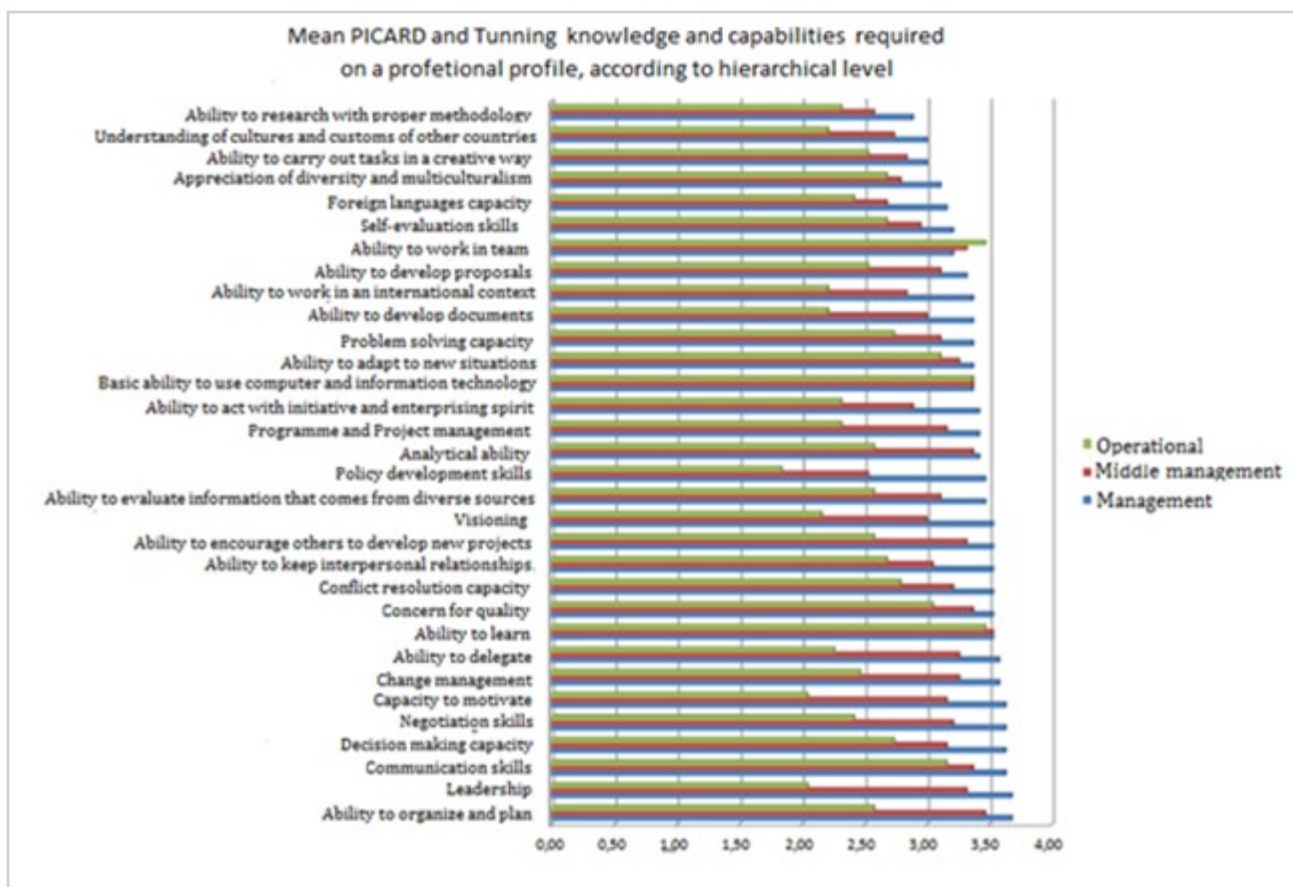
In addition to the knowledge and skills described above and positively rated for levels of management and middle management, participants were asked to indicate the degree of importance assigned various PICARD and Tuning’s knowledge and capabilities, identifying if they answers to the customs requirements.

On this question the participants showed that knowledge and capabilities that actually integrate the PICARD proposals are important and required at any hierarchical level, however the average of acceptance will depend of the responsibilities and functions associated to the collaborator.

The following graphic shows, how the middle management and operational level has less grade of importance assigned to those capabilities associated to leadership, but are encouraged on those like the ability to learn, team work and technology knowledge.

According to the information provided by the participants, customs require professional profiles, where the collaborator count whit all characteristics and knowledge proposed; this capabilities and knowledge will allow the custom to develop it daily activities successfully and efficiently.

Figure 8. Mean PICARD and Tuning knowledge and capabilities required on a professional profile, according to hierarchical level



Source: Developed by the Authors

Knowing this, the research moves to evaluate the attitudes and behaviors necessary for efficient and effective management of the customs officers, this was based on the competencies described in the Tuning tool, applied to each of the hierarchical levels. Retrieved results are shown on the following chart.

Figure 9.

Tuning Aptitudes and behavior's	Means		
	Management	Middle management	Operational level
Role model	3,21	3,16	2,89
Customer service focused	3,21	3,21	3,21
Self-confidence	3,37	3,05	2,95
Empathy, awareness and objectivity	3,37	3,11	3,05
Motivation of employees and co-workers	3,47	3,26	2,79
Values and Ethic	3,68	3,58	3,32

Source: Developed by the Authors

Participants show positive average, tending to essential on all proposals, where the lowest average score was given to motivate the employees for operational control, which is consistent with the position of the respondent in that the professional profile operational level is limited in the field of leadership.

A particularity of the information is that the orientation and customer service get equally average rating for all levels, thus highlights that it is equally required for the efficient and effective management of customs officials, regardless of the hierarchical level.

Having high values and ethics are considered equally indispensable for the three hierarchical levels analyzed, this reflects that advocate for policies of zero tolerance to corruption, perform duties with honesty, among others, are essential to the success of initiatives customs administration, so that every one of the people in it laboring must have formal training.

Summary and concluding remarks

Considering the information gathered, it is possible to conclude that Tuning Project, PICARD and CATT are complementary to each other in the definition of world-class custom and the professional profile required for the customs officials.

This professional profile must be result of agreements among WCO and governments with the aim to implement the efficiency and effectiveness in the customs. However the administrations also recognize the importance of a formal university education to improve the appropriate professional profile on their employees.

The predominant approach on the results is control, which was highlighted by the customs authorities on trade facilitation, as promoted by international agencies, which should imply that their labors are oriented to supervision, inspection, verification research and evaluation of compliance with the rules and laws that apply in each administration.

Therefore the influence of the approach considered as predominant is not determinant on the professional profile definition, since the characteristics, abilities and aptitudes required are assigned with different levels of importance but considered necessary to develop the customs activities appropriately.

The fact that in most cases, none of the variables are considered irrelevant shows that the customs professional profile should include the proposed features as a cluster, so the employee is able to apply this knowledge to a different extent depending on the nature of his or her work, the approach and the hierarchical level in which evolves.

According to this study, PICARD program has gaps regarding characteristics considered necessary for customs today, in order to reach the goal of being world-class customs; that is why including skills or competencies provided by Tuning programs and CATT could strength current standards.

Therefore PICARD Professional standards do not yet meet the requirements of world-class custom, where officials or collaborators must be professionally educated to guaranty that they have full understanding of the customs system at any hierarchical level and that count with a professional profile where the collaborator participate actively in the custom development to reach the aim of been world-class customs, even when administrations could present different approaches.