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The Professionalization of Driving

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**Abstract:** Driving is establishing basic foundations to become a profession. Like the professionalization of law and medicine in the past 100years, the driving field is at the middle of becoming a profession with competency standards, a code of professional conduct, registration and certification and self-regulation. All professions require highly specialized education and training, an ethical code, self-regulation by a professional association and certification and licencing. Driving should become a profession for the same reasons medicine and law become professions, each requires practitioners to have a specialized body of knowledge, a code of conduct and self-regulation by knowledgeable professionals to assure competency and protect the public. The driving community can follow a road map for how driving can be professionalized by reviewing the history of the medical, legal and other established professions. Suggested is a seven step process for the professionalization of driving.

**Keywords:** profession; driving, registration; certification; regulation; code of professional conduct; specialized knowledge; ethics; education.

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**Biographical notes:** Nicholas Mabwe is the President of Drivers Association of Zimbabwe a nonprofit organization and professional association of drivers in the transport industry. He is the author of Drivers Association of Zimbabwe Bylaws; Constitution and the Code of Conduct and Standards of Safe Driving Practice. He has vast knowledge and experience in crime, scene attendance investigations, traffic enforcement and docket compilation having worked in the Zimbabwe Republic Police for 20 years of which the last six years he was in the traffic branch to make him a traffic expert.

1. **Introduction**

Road traffic crushes take the lives of nearly 1.3 million people every year and injure 20-50 million more. Over 90% of road traffic crushes occur in low and middle income countries which have only 40% of the world’s registered vehicles.

The Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 has been drawn to guide efforts at national and local levels. If successfully implemented could achieve its goal to stabilize and then reduce the forecasted level of road traffic fatalities.

Most of these road traffic crushes are caused by human error by drivers who have developed the habit of failing to obey road rules and regulations.

1. **Definition** **of** **profession**

According to Wikipedia:

“A profession is an occupation that requires extensive training and the study and mastery of specialized knowledge and usually has a professional association ethical code and process of certification and licensing”,

Professionalization may be described as the process that a trade or occupation transforms itself into a true profession that establishes membership qualifications and a professional association that prescribe norms of professional conduct(Bullock and Trombley, 1999). Educational standards, licensure, certification and accreditation attempt to assure the public of professional competency and create a degree of demarcation between qualified and unqualified practitioner. To become a real profession usually means obtaining the legal right to self-regulate.

The following are examples of occupations that transformed into professions: physicians; lawyers; dentists; accountants; architects etc.

Physicians and lawyers are among the first to professionalize successfully. They become self-regulated pursuant to legal codification and could set standards for education, licensure, practice and behavior. Professions like medicine and law have common attributes, including;

* Core body of specialized knowledge
* Associations to set training, education and ethical guidelines.
* Code of professional conduct
* Commitment to continuing professional development.
* Self-regulation

Different level of education, skill development and ongoing accreditation are required for different professions in the future driving will be influenced by driving practitioners, outside organizations and government agencies.

1. **Should driving become a profession?**

Should driving become a profession? Should regulations be enacted governing the practice of driving and who should create those regulations?

Driving should become a profession for the same reasons the practice of medicine and law became professions each requires a code of conduct and the malpractice of each specialized domain may cause severe negative consequences (i.e. bodily injury, death, incarceration, loss of money, privacy violations and bad public policy). Thus each domain requires educational standards and a code of conduct to assure the public of competency.

At this time, the field of driving is overcrowded with unqualified practitioners creating competition between the qualified and the unqualified and those who are truly qualified to practice. This has resulted in the transport industry facing many challenges like high rates of accidents, thefts, murders, rapes, assaults, harming the public and employers. World over road safety have been placed on the individual road user with focus on encouraging good behavior via licencing, education, training, publicity and enforcement.

Furthermore; it is not the number of traffic law enforcement officers in the street that brings traffic law enforcement. But most traffic management issues can be done at the background.

In order to qualify for self-regulation, governments consider several factors, first, whether there is risk of harm to the public from members of the occupational group. Second, the occupational group needs to be large enough to have adequate resources to implement self-regulatory model. Lastly the occupational group needs to have a defined body of knowledge that might be attained through specified education and does not overlap significantly with other occupational groups. If the body of knowledge is already possessed by other occupational groups, it becomes impractical to set standards of practice for the profession.

There still is a need for a drivers accreditation organizations to establish educational guidelines and performance standards and to create a clear demarcation between qualified and unqualified practitioners.

This laid the foundation for establishing the Drivers Association of Zimbabwe an organization built to develop proficiency in existing skills, and develop new skills and set new conduct and performance standards. Drivers Association of Zimbabwe was formed to advance the driving disciplines, define and improve standards in driving education and establish a code of ethics- with the overall public goal of improving life and promoting road safety.

Therefore it is critical for drivers to follow a code of conduct and develop processes to guard against misconduct to ensure the public of professional competency to uphold the reputation and maintain credibility of driving.

For the above listed reasons, driving must become a PROFESSION.

1. **Specialization of driving**

The practice of law has about 24 different practice areas. The practice of medicine has approximately 17 specialties. Like law and medicine, driving have few complicated fields and much too big and complex for one person to master in one lifetime.

Of course certain knowledge and skill sets may be identical for driving areas yet each specialty has a unique set of responsibilities and knowledge requirements that differentiate one specialty from another.

Driving can be organized under the following domains;

* Bus driver
* Taxi driver
* Truck driver
* Ambulance driver
* Delivery vehicle driver
* Chauffer
* Motorbike driver

It may be argued that with rare exception no one person can master each domain. Note that this is preliminary list and not complete. We are at the very beginning of a long revolutionary process.

The profession of driving will evolve to create many specializations. After all it took law and medicine over 100 years to evolve as professions with different specialties.

1. **How to organize driving as a profession**

Different professions are organized differently. Considering that the authority to licence and regulate causes monopoly on rights, any profession may abuse authority in self-serving manner under pretext of protecting the public law and medicine are examples of professions that both protect the public from unqualified practitioners and hurt the public in self-serving ways (eg restrict entry to raise pay and limit competition).

The goal is to design a driving profession that protects the public, advances driving profession, improves the quality of services and creates an environment for rewarding careers. I respectfully suggest we can learn from the legal and medical professions borrow the good and mitigate the harmful.

Some consider the creation of professions under color of law as motivated simply to create a monopoly to limit competition and raise prices. As a result, it is imperative for the emerging driving profession to show that self-regulation and setting performance standards improves the quality of services and protects the public not withstanding secondary consequences of pay inflation or competition limits.

The following is a suggested series of seven process steps for the professionalization of driving;

* The full-time occupation of driving is identified.
* Educational programs are established where specialized knowledge and skills are identified and incorporated into CPD programs.
* A professional association is established to help define standards of the driving profession.
* A professional code of ethics is created.
* Certifications and licences are developed to distinguish qualified from unqualified practitioners .
* A professional association defines entry requirements and disciplinary procedures.
* Gaining the support of law for self-autonomy and self-regulation.

The Drivers Association Of Zimbabwe membership demonstrates to employers and clients that a person is not only qualified but also committed to driving as a profession. Registration makes a person more valuable to employers and allows drivers to;

* Enjoy employment and advancement opportunities.
* Have competitive advantage over candidates without certificates.
* Earn higher wages.

The Drivers Association of Zimbabwe Code of professional conduct provides ethical guidelines to help drivers. This demonstrate to employers and clients that a driver is not only committed to driving as a profession but will also act in the best interests of clients and prevent or mitigate potential harm to the client.

In future D.A.Z in conjunction with other institutions in the transport industry will develop entry requirements, licensure and disciplinary procedures and gain support of law for self-autonomy and regulation. This will take time and hard work, it took law and medicine hundreds of years to become professions. We have the opportunity to make driving a profession in about four years.

All members of the driving community should collaborate in developing and professionalizing driving to improve life, business and road safety. Together we can save lives and property.

**References**

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