


PETALS: A common framework for developing and certifying productivity specialists

First deliberated on in the cool mountains of Mongolia and continued by the pristine blue waters of Fiji, the APO initiative on productivity education, training, and accredited learning systems (PETALS) is gradually taking shape. In essence, PETALS represents a fresh proposal for a competency-based paradigm for producing and certifying productivity specialists in APO member countries.



Participants in the 2006 PETALS workshop

The idea for developing a competency-based framework for the training and certification of productivity professionals was first suggested at a DON workshop on Enhancing NPOs' Core Competence: Productivity Education and Certification held in August 2004. After a follow-up meeting of a core group of experts, a workshop on PETALS was held in Suva, Fiji, 25–31 August 2006. The introduction of PETALS will close the gaps in the training capabilities of NPOs on productivity and quality improvement tools and techniques. PETALS can serve as a reference allowing NPOs to compare their training courses and make adjustments where necessary. Moreover, PETALS will enhance the credibility of certifications issued by some NPOs. Designed with a competence-based approach, PETALS will help to ensure that specific, measurable skills, knowledge, and attitudes are imparted in future NPO training. This will hopefully lead to recognition by industry.

There was strong support for the PETALS initiative from the NPO delegates attending the workshop in Fiji. The PETALS core group comprises Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Singapore. The core group was joined by delegates from the NPOs of Bangladesh, the Republic of China, Cambodia, Iran, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. At the end of the Suva workshop, the foundations of the PETALS architecture were firmly in place: the principal functions, roles, and expected competencies and specific abilities of a productivity specialist were defined and the core areas and topics productivity specialists are expected to master were identified for three levels (Table). The next step in the PETALS initiative is to develop the appropriate learning modules in a follow-up meeting of the PETALS core group in mid-2007. 

Outline of productivity specialists under PETALS

Roles and functions

- Technical expert in productivity and quality techniques
- Consultant
- Trainer/facilitator
- Promoter

Key competencies

- Ability to diagnose productivity and quality problems
- Ability to identify productivity and quality solutions
- Ability to convince management and stakeholders of solutions
- Ability to implement solutions
- Ability to evaluate solutions
- Ability to sustain and improve solutions
- Ability to train in productivity and quality techniques and solutions
- Ability to develop new productivity and quality techniques

Levels

- Level I: Productivity practitioner
- Level II: Productivity professional
- Level III: Productivity specialist