



People for Proper Policing in North Wales

HERMES "High Impact approach for Enhancing Road safety through More Effective communication Skills for driving instructors"

Funded by the European Commission full report at <http://alles-fuehrerschein.at/HERMES/>

Quote p32 ... **Car accidents are a result of human behaviour**

Car driving implies **constantly making choices**. In this sense car driving is **a challenging task** and it becomes obvious when we compare it for example with a captain of an airline plane whose freedom of choice is a great deal smaller. He does not have to think about whether to overtake or not, change lanes, maintain a proper safety margin at different speeds, when and how much to reduce speed before a bend, to give way or not, or how to behave in those many unclear situations occurring with other traffic users. To be clear, a car driver's behaviour is not only the result of free choice, but it is to a much higher extent than the behaviour of an airplane captain. The pilot mainly has to react to clear procedures. A car driver often has to react to procedures (general signs and laws), but he has - in contrast to the pilot - a greater degree of freedom. The following examples will illustrate that a driver's behaviour is a result of both reactions to procedures and free choices and shall make this distinction clear in order to be aware of **the importance of choice-making in accidents**:

When the traffic light is red the driver simply has to react to the law and stop his car (of course he could break the rules on purpose), but when the traffic light changes from green to orange and red the driver has a few seconds of free choice, whether to pass or to stop. When overtaking is forbidden the normal driver behaviour reacts accordingly and especially when oncoming traffic appears closely no normal driver would think about having a free choice, even if he would be in a different mood (in a hurry or aggressive at the moment, etc.). But in situations without this prohibition or with less dense traffic the choices if, when and where to overtake will vary from person to person and will also depend on the driver's mood at the moment. Further clear examples of free choices are: looking to the left one, two or even three times before crossing a road, turning the heater on now or ten seconds later when the traffic situation is less complicate, the steering and seating position etc.

Human behaviour - here in the sense of permanent choice making - on the road is not only determined by skills and knowledge, because of the high degree of freedom when steering a car. Already the permanent choice of speed provides a rather wide range in each situation. Considering the fact that we for example choose higher speed in the same situation when we are in a hurry makes clear, that **human behaviour is in addition to knowledge and skills also influenced by acuteness or moods, personal believes and the self-awareness** of these conditions influencing our choices (analogous to the two higher levels and the right column of the GDE-matrix).

Because of the high degree of freedom when making choices as a car driver in the second, this task shall not be understood as a skill- or knowledge-based one only. In order to avoid accidents car driving shall rather be understood as **a (psycho-)social task**. Social behaviour is not primarily determined by skills and knowledge but **acuteness or moods, personal believes or convictions** and self-awareness of these conditions influencing our choices. Consequently, didactical methods for driver education must not only focus on traditional educational methods like teaching in schools which focuses on knowledge and skills mainly. Car drivers' education shall also focus on selfawareness skills of acuteness, moods, motives, believes and attitudes and on how these factors influence the choices on the road.

The PPP comments This longwinded (translated!) report concludes what the PPP stance has always been, that road safety (incident avoidance) is all about the **psychology of the driving population** not the physics of the driving process. This is why the PPP are supporting the '**mind driving**' philosophy and campaign by **Stephen Haley** which describes in applicable detail what motivates and must concern the driver. It is also why we have always been extremely critical of the failed national simplistic and abusive 'speed kills' policy. If the legislators and others in the chain analysed their own motivation they would see the reality they have to work within. Their failure or inability to do so, makes them unsuited to such a formidable responsibility. We believe that the incident statistics and the trends are misinterpreted to indicate that a useless policy is showing positive results and mask the significant advances in other factors. Viz the major and ongoing improvements in vehicle engineering continue to mask the failings of the 'speed kills' policy and the serious deterioration in attitudes of many in the driving population. This latter factor is a vicious circle as the policy further distorts the drivers' steadily deteriorating attitudes and belief set.

The comparison with airline pilots is interesting, as many of these same legislators believe that they could remotely and **instantaneously monitor and control** the vehicles on our complex road network. In reality the ATC system is often near to it's limit and occasionally fails due to human failure by controllers or pilots or is saved from system failures by human intervention. Ironically the project appears to identify the key factors and then ignores many of them. We believe that the relevant attitudes and beliefs are formed very early in life and training and understanding via education in Schools must precede any formal driver training. The more perceptive young adults interviewed during the DSA survey highlighted this principle.