

Driver training simulators are reaching a level of maturity with regard to their technical sophistication. Many rail organisations are now second and third generation simulator users. However, from an educational standpoint the level of simulator integration with training curriculum is varied. Some simulators are used only for initial training, others are reserved for periodic competency assessment, while others are primarily used for single tasks like conversion training from one traction type to another or route learning. Thousands of hours can be expended to specify the technical requirements of simulators without a corresponding effort made to integrate the simulators into the cultural environment of the organisation. This paper will examine the socio-cultural environment in a number of rail organisations over the past 14 years and discuss the varying degree to which the simulators have been used.

The primary author of this paper used the auto-ethnographic research approach to introspect and analyse their own experiences as an Educator in the rail industry, as part of his current Doctor of Education Degree program. As a rail professional with ~30 year's experience, and having worked specifically with rail simulators and with experience of the use of rail simulators in the UK and Europe, Australia, China and India, he had had the opportunity to observe and compare the practices of a wide range of organisations. Observations and experiences since 2002 were recollected, journaled and critically examined using the thematic analysis approach. The research shows that the integration of train driver simulators into a rail organisation is far larger process than their initial procurement. The factors that influence the success of simulator integration can be divided into technical, cultural and pedagogical elements and the interrelationship of these factors will be examined.