

TRAINING OF SEAFARERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

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Abstract. This presentation outlines problems of training of seafarers' in accordance with the accepted international requirements. The ILO requirements for the maritime industry were summed up and the need to factor these requirements in the training process was identified. General principles for training in social and labour spheres were proposed.

Seamanship is a global industry, the work of seafarers is associated with high risks and requires special training and protection. The United Nations Organisation (UN), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are responsible for setting up a legal framework for requirements to training of maritime specialists, which is fundamentally different from other spheres as it is inherently connected to the international market of transportation services and the ship-owners are obliged to fulfil national as well as international rules.

Training has a special importance because of the shortage of qualified personnel in the maritime business. According to different estimates, there is a 4% shortage of maritime officers in the world. The same is true for Russia as a whole, as well as for the North-West Region of Russia. One of the reasons is the decline in the status of the seafarer as a profession. Young people in Europe are not eager to get out to sea. The labour market is shifting towards the East where labour is not only cheaper but also more specialised. China is becoming very active in the maritime labour market supplying 5000 newly graduated officers of the trade fleet annually, whereas Russia graduates only 1000 a year. The Russian fleet is lacking senior command staff, yet over 26000 Russian sailors get employed by foreign shipping lines every year. The staffing issues of the Russian fleet have been discussed at the government level and the meetings of the Marine Collegium.

The strategic policy papers on the development of the Russian maritime industry emphasise that the national maritime policy goals can only be achieved if adequate human resources are available, both on the level of management and the level of implementation. Therefore, priority is given to improving the system responsible for engagement and training of young people. This means that a conducive environment should be created to preserve and attract qualified personnel, preserve and further develop the educational system in the maritime sphere, create a management training system for the government sector, including the maritime industry, strengthen the maritime traditions of Russia, ensure government support to the maintenance and operation of training vessels and the training infrastructure of maritime schools. Moreover, government support is essential to the training institutions and organisations that are responsible for implementing Russia's international obligations in training and navigation safety.

Investments in training and retraining of personnel have a long-term benefit that translates into overall growth of production efficiency as a result of better skills of the labour force.

The training and retraining of recognised professionals in the waterborne transport is a prerequisite to successful transport operations. International and national rules and requirements commit ship-owners to provide and monitor a continuous system of training and retraining of senior crew members.

It is necessary to note that compliance with the international and national maritime requirements also requires shore-based administrative personnel on all levels to be engaged in a continuous process of training and retraining which serves as an organic component of the overall human resources policy. In the majority of industries, this training process builds on the internal, national priorities.

The maritime sector differs from others in that it is subject to a wide range of international requirements. These are, in the first place, the conventions, agreements, contracts and other legal instruments which were ratified by Russia. Additionally, the carriage of goods by sea comes within the jurisdiction of various national systems adopted by flag states, port states, etc.

The existing workforce issues are closely related to those encountered in the social sphere, in the world of labour and in the training sector. Governments, educational institutions and ship-owners deal with these issues in accordance with their resources but it is important to emphasize the importance of a systemic approach to training of specialists.

Modern approaches to quality assessment in education put quality at the centre of the educational system, as it reflects whether the achieved educational outcomes conform to the regulatory requirements, as well as social and personal expectations. This approach is viewed as the main principle of the process of education stated in the Priority Areas of the National Educational Policy, which was adopted in the Russian Federation. This approach calls for a number of measures on the level of the government, as well as educational institutions to introduce innovations in training.

Innovations in higher education are transnational by nature and include not only the development and application of the latest achievements in science and technology, but also a reasonable diversification of acquired knowledge.

Professional training in the maritime sphere is an established system, which is regulated by a number of international conventions, as per IMO requirements. Among these conventions are the Convention on Standards of Training and Certification (STCW), the Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution (MARPOL), etc.

At the same time, social aspects of international requirements for the shipping industry gain even more significance in the current economic climate. And the framework in this sphere is set by the ILO conventions and recommendations.

Social and labour relations in the shipping industry are directly regulated by 40 maritime conventions. Therefore, there is a long list of international instruments that cover a lot of issues concerning seafarers' working and living conditions and free time on board the ship. The ILO member states have ratified, to various degrees, the maritime conventions, and it became imperative to integrate international treaties and to harmonise the standards. This was achieved by adopting the Maritime Labour Convention in 2006.

The consolidated convention integrated 36 separate regulatory documents of the ILO and became the single coordinated legal instrument, which is based on the fundamental principles of the ILO and includes almost all the current labour standards stipulated in maritime conventions and recommendations. This means that the new legal documents can be viewed as a 'forth pillar' of the international legal framework in the maritime industry, in addition to the key IMO conventions (SOLAS 1974, STCW 1978 (1995) and MARPOL 1973/1978). The new convention contains additional requirements for governments, ship-owners and ship personnel and increases the practical role of social agreements on the government, sectoral and company level.

Russian water transport workers traditionally practice collective agreements. There is a general agreement at the government level and tariff agreements for sea and river transport, which lay out minimal social protection standards for the sector. Many enterprises develop and adopt collective agreements. However, there is a certain difference between the Russian and international markets of transportation services. The

domestic market is regulated by the Russian labour legislation, whereas international operations are primarily governed by the ILO instruments that Russian has ratified.

The advances of social and labour policy, as well as a steady international trend to tighten control over compliance with the international conventions in the maritime industry make the instruction and understanding of the principal ILO requirements even more important. The knowledge of social and economic processes in the current conditions is in high demand among the employers and the students, so these aspects should be included in the curriculum. The study of social and economic issues is usually associated with national contexts. But many vessels are manned by international crews, and as citizens of different countries seafarers enjoy different levels of social protection, from pay scale to pension fund schemes.

So far professional training and retraining curricula have not been paying enough attention to the provisions of the ILO conventions. But the maritime labour market is becoming international, and requirements are getting more stringent. Whether the flag state ratified the convention or not, compliance with these requirements will be verified. So training should impart knowledge that has practical value. Until recently the responsibility for many issues rested with the master of a ship as a ship-owners' representative. The regulatory authorities held the master responsible for the safety of navigation, safety of cargo, etc. These responsibilities are reflected in guidance documents and duty regulations. However, labour issues were limited to observing the established limitations on hours of work, timely pay and other limited administrative issues. Labour relations and social protection were not part of the master's duties and were usually the task of the ship operator's management. The new convention establishes forms of certification, monitoring and complaint procedures on board the ship, and the master of the ship on behalf of the ship-owner will bear additional responsibility for adhering to these requirements. This entails the need for additional training in social and labour issues for command staff, while maritime school curricula should include additional courses for the in-depth study of these issues. The expanded presence of social and economic issues in the learning curriculum will ensure a certain degree of legal and social protection of newly graduated specialists, who may enjoy this protection as citizens of their country both at work and in everyday life.

The training and retraining curricula for seafarers should include the following issues:

- administrative and legal aspects of seafarers' employment: recruitment, minimum age, minimum medical requirements, service contracts, vacation privileges, staffing requirements, and repatriation;
- professional training requirements for the maritime industry: minimum requirements for the level of training and qualifications, career development, the system of retraining and further professional development;
- working and living conditions, occupational safety and health, working hours, accommodation and rest conditions, catering and food, medical care on board and on shore, safety of work and prevention of accidents;
- social and economic motivation for seafarers: remuneration of labour and incentives, compensation packages, social security;
- administration of control procedures: flag state and port state obligations; grievance procedures.

It is clear that, unlike future economists and managers, seafarers do not need a full spectrum of labour-related and social courses in the curriculum. But a more comprehensive focus on the issues is necessary as it will make it possible:

- to ensure an innovative and comprehensive approach to education and training in line with the modern trend;

- to take into account employers' needs, as well as current international and national requirements in training;
- to make maritime professional training attractive to future and current students.

The comprehensive approach should be reasonably balanced in relation to the acquisition of specialized knowledge and practical skills.

A more comprehensive training of seafarers that includes social and labour issues in accordance with the ILO requirements will ensure that the shipping industry has the so much needed specialists in various professional fields and will contribute to the efficient development and implementation of government and corporate level long-term human resources strategies.

References

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