

QUALITY MARITIME EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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GLOBAL OVERVIEW

Shipping industry is a trailblazer in globalizing employment. Irrespective of where the ships are registered, or ownership, or management is based; seafarers come from any part of the world. This allows many advantages in recruitment and employment flexibilities.

Seafarers' culture, attitudes, attributes, education, work ethics vary – but they have to meet common, industry wide competence and attitudinal requirements for safe, efficient and clean operations in the industry.

International Maritime Organization (IMO), a specialized agency of the United Nations is entrusted with the responsibility of making rules and guidelines for prescribing the competence requirements for the industry. All the seafaring nations signatory to IMO ratify the conventions and implement the same through instruments and machinery of own administration.

Hence, Global Minimum Training standards do exist.

WHAT IS WRONG

However, deficiencies do exist.

- STCW has not achieved a truly universal standard. There is too much of non-compliance (some willful), too much room for interpretation and competence is not validly assessed.
- Industry does not have a strong commitment to training, which is seriously under-resourced and with insufficient recognition given to the investment aspect of training.
- There is a shortage of competence in delivery of Maritime Education and Training, globally; and the professionalism, expertise and industry experience of trainers need strengthening.
- There is little commitment to continuing development of competence.
- Attention is too concentrated on technical aspects and fails to evolve with the times.

SOME SUCCESS STORY

Seafaring, as a profession, has seen extinction of historical sources of manpower and emergence of newer areas. The BIMCO-ISF survey report of 2005, which is the authentic industry reference, highlights, (a) shortage of skilled manpower at management levels to escalate, and, (b) a shift of sourcing to Indian subcontinent, Far East and Eastern Europe.

In 2005, 42 % of the burden of seafaring was shared by Asia alone.

It is a matter of great satisfaction, that the world today sees India as a place of achievement and potential, a source of intellectual capital and a driver of global growth in the 21st century. India made significant investments in higher education; and that is - in a sense, the basis of today's knowledge economy.

So is also the case with Maritime Education and Training. If today the Indian seafarer is the most preferred nationality in the world of shipping, it is only thanks to the pioneers and their consistent focus on the same.

At the operational and management levels on ships, India has emerged as the most preferred nation for sourcing of skilled and competent manpower. There are many reasons for this:

- a) The basic education system in India is very robust and provides strongest foundation for building high *standards of skills, initiatives, professionalism and leadership required*.
- b) The Indian Government has prescribed highest levels of entry criteria in the world, for entry into the seafaring profession and undergoing pre-sea courses.
- c) Because of strict age restrictions at entry level, the Indian seafarers have the best age profile.
- d) The young population in India is the largest in the world, and seafaring still being a preferred profession, the selection process to the career still commands a healthy selection ratio. In a country with 18 languages and 22000 dialects, English continues to be the language of business and government.
- e) Indians are generally law abiding and obedient.
- f) They are ambitious and wish to rise up the ranks as fast as can.
- g) Indians are said to be expensive; but ask the experienced companies who look at not only the wage cost alone, but also factor in expenses on extra superintendence, workshop and technical help, cargo claims, damages and losses. Then the story is very different.
- h) India is a proven intellectual capital base.

It is in this context that I take the example of my institute, The Academy of Maritime Education and Training (Amet), now a Maritime University; whose core competency lies in Pre-Sea training for officers and which has emerged as the pioneer, leader and trend-setter in the Global Maritime Education and Training arena. In existence for 15 years in the private sector, even 5 years before the Indian Government opened up maritime education to private sector in the country; today we have the world's best brand in shipping, the A. P. Moller – Maersk Group partnering with us in a very big way, which pattern is being emulated the world over. Amet now has been declared as the first Maritime University in the very strict education regime of the country.

Truly a barometer and a reference point for Global Maritime Education and Training – Amet's academic profile overview will in effect cover the subject in its entirety.

THE INDUSTRY RESPONSE

The shipping industry is the strongest cog in the wheel of the world economy, and it is important that this industry, which is of fundamental importance to world economy, has adequate supply of well-trained manpower. The industry – generally speaking, has not given enough priority to human resources. It is easy to build ships today, but building high quality crew takes lot more time and effort. 3 – 5 years for junior ranks and 8 – 9 years for senior levels.

Today, a major initiative is needed for developing Maritime Education and Training at industry peak bodies to enthuse a strong commitment to training by the industry. Small and medium size ship operators with less than vulnerable fleet size, increasingly rely on poaching from markets rather than investing in developing their own talent pipelines. They find it cheaper to pay slightly more and poach trained resource rather than invest in training. It is imperative that industry invests in identifying and honing their

tomorrow's leaders. Throwing more money to manage talent shortage in the supply-starved market is never going to be good solution. This may well be the biggest difference between the winners and the laggards.

THE HR IMPERITIVE

Further, to aptly compliment Quality training, it must also be realized that innovation is also needed in delivering optimal performance at shipboard levels. After all, the ultimate goal of MET is to deliver in performance.

Crew performance is a function of individual capabilities, management policies, cultural factors, experience, training, work environment, and countless other factors.

Matter-of-fact, the "human element" is really a complex, multi-dimensional issue that affects maritime safety and marine environment. It involves the entire spectrum of human activities performed by the ships' crew, shore based management, and other relevant parties, all of whom need to cooperate to address human element issues effectively.

And to make this happen, there is much of training needed at Management areas on shore. We can devise all sorts of training for that seafarer, but, of what effective use is it, if the employee does not fully engage himself in delivering his optimal level, being restrained and pulled back by the poor HR practices of the organization.

One of the popular practices is that, it takes nothing less than a Mariner, if not a Master Mariner, to head the HR functions of the shipping company.

With due respects to his seamanship abilities, unless he is properly trained, he is about as proficient at this job as a fish is at carpentry.

It is not just about filling vacancies.

Today we need specialized skills of sound HR practices to bring this function on par with contemporary industry practices.

Mariners who are trained in modern, contemporary, HR practices.

Active engagement of employees in their jobs and work becomes almost mandatory for shipboard operations.

Certainly unhappiness contributes to disengagement, which in turn lowers productivity.

Engagement is about motivating employees to do their best. An engaged employee gives his job and his company his 100 percent. This makes the difference in an industry where the most valuable resource is really the ships staff.

Moreover, in times of wavering loyalty, employee engagement is a powerful retention strategy. The fact that it has a strong impact on the bottom-line, adds to its significance.

In this equation, we must also consider the effects of fatigue, boredom, health, familiarity, carelessness, family problems, pressure to meet schedules, ergonomics and confinement, which all play their part in accidents and incidents.

I am afraid, unless the HRM issues are adequately addressed by the companies, we will continue to have intelligent, well-trained, highly skilled and experienced professionals making critical mistakes – notwithstanding technological advances been designed to reduce these.

THE ENHANCED SCOPE OF MARITIME EDUCATION

The time has now come, some may say it is already too late, to re-define our scope and limits to what we call as “Maritime Education and Training”.

Whenever we refer to Maritime Education and Training, globally, invariably, almost taken for granted, the limits get automatically defined to Shipboard competencies.

With tremendous growth in various sectors of shipping, as well as newer opportunities emerging globally, there is an urgent need for qualified and skillful manpower to be able to sustain this growth, if not drive the growth.

We, being considered leaders in Maritime Education and Training, naturally this mantle too falls on us, to be able to innovate and respond to the needs of the other allied sectors of shipping that is growing so fast, be it Ship building, Ports and Terminals, Supply-Chain and Logistics, Off-shore, and maritime support services.

We must remember that more than 50 % of the jobs are not invented as yet. As the industry evolves, newer skill sets come into being. We need to connect with the industry and be a solution provider rather than a stand-alone educational institution. Source, train and supply manpower, that is job-fit.

Since last couple of years, Amet has taken a strategic choice of creating multiple drivers of growth, leverage opportunities in the emerging Indian economy that best match our proven internal capabilities as well as beyond. Consolidation of our leading position, raising the academic profile, capacity building, distributed leadership etcetera meant a paradigm shift in the governance mind-set to realign to the new focus, un-learning the past archival model of operation.

In doing so, we may have to challenge existing paradigms, thus driving change rather than just responding to it.

2008 was a momentous year for us. The prestigious Lloyds List award, the University status, Excellence award from Indian Maritime Administration, etcetera, conclusively demonstrated the robust fundamentals underlying our growth momentum.

As the first University in Maritime Education, we realize, that we have achieved in providing that fillip, which was so much needed in this country. As a University, we now have the necessary empowerment to be quick in responding to the needs of human capital requirements of the global shipping industry. These include Graduate degrees in Naval Architecture and Offshore Engineering, Harbour Engineering & Off-Shore Technology, Applied Marine Information Technology, Petroleum Engineering, Electrical & Electronics Engineering-Marine, and Shipping and Logistics Management.

The Post Graduate programmes are specifically customized for seafaring officers like M.Sc. Degree in Maritime Fleet Operations Management and M. Tech. Degree in Marine Engineering Management. The Senior Officers on board a merchant navy ship, are the principal officers who are responsible for the efficient management of the ship which is the de facto profit center of a shipping company, albeit, at a micro level of operations. It can therefore be said that these officers are good managers of a shipping company at the micro level. But if these officers aspire to take up senior level positions ashore in the marine industry, their technical as well as managerial skills need to be upgraded.

Other Post Graduate programmes include Management degree in Shipping & Logistics, Shipping Finance and Marine Human Resource Management.

PhD. Doctoral programmes are also commenced in the Research Disciplines of all marine related areas.

Caution!!!

If we continue to do the same way, we will continue to get the same result!