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**Expanding Frontiers -
Challenges and Opportunities in Maritime Education and Training**

**The Place Of Women in
Constanta Maritime University**

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Abstract: International work regulations today represent an important component of the international framework and their purpose is to ensure equal profits from the world economy growth for everybody (men and women).

Globalisation created many possibilities and advantages, while millions of workers and employers all over the world were facing new challenges. The Global economy led to dislocation of workers and enterprises, engaging sudden accumulations and migrations of money capital and, in this way, causing a financial instability in certain regions. Despite the optimism from the beginning, globalisation did not represent the dawn of a new era of prosperity for everybody. The inequalities generated poverty, a productivity decrease, social instability and even conflicts. This is the reason why the international community admitted that establishment of fundamental game rules was necessary in the scope of guaranteeing that globalisation gives everybody (men or women) a chance to reach prosperity. IMO produced its strategy for the integration of women into the maritime sector in 1988 and began implementation of the IMO Women Development Programme (WED) in 1989, concentrating on equal access to maritime training through both mainstream programs and gender specific projects. In some countries, the shipping industry offers a way out of poverty for many workers. Employment in the shipping industry provides access to foreign currency and a regular salary with a direct impact on the economic viability of seafarers and their extended families. There is no intrinsic reason why women should not participate in, and benefit from, employment within the shipping industry.

Due to women's acceptance on board merchant vessels, their presence in a maritime

university is no longer looked at with scepticism. For example, in the last few years at Constanta Maritime University it could be easily noticed that the hardest working students during faculty years were women. This is one of the reasons why the great majority of them distinguished themselves as future lecturers. This represents one of the reasons that the university's administration offered them the opportunity to teach various maritime courses. This is why most of the young assistants in our university today are females who fulfil their tasks very well.

In this paper we are trying to show that women represent the new generation of maritime engineering teachers as they are the ones that quit sailing much earlier than men and tried to find a proper "lady like" land job. Due to its influence and special status in the city and because of the high number of students, Constanta Maritime University managed to persuade these women to accept teaching both general knowledge and maritime engineering subjects.

Keywords: shipping industry, equal chances, equal opportunities, equal conditions, maritime university, female work force

1. Introduction

In order to discuss such a sensitive issue as the place of women in a men's world, we should first make reference to the historical background supporting our argument. Therefore, we consider that the first important document related to this subject was the 1919 regulation of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This document set into motion and developed an international regulation work system focused on increasing men's and women's chances of obtaining a decent job in conditions of equity, security and dignity regardless of the working domain. In the worldwide economy today, international work regulations are an essential component of the international framework and their main purpose is to ensure that everybody (men and women) profits from the world economic growth. Due to new technologies, people, goods and money capital circulate easily and fast between countries creating an interdependent world economic network that everybody on this planet should pay attention to.

Globalisation created many possibilities and advantages, while millions of workers and employers all over the world were facing new challenges. One of the greatest challenges brought about by the modern world forced men to give up any prejudices or superstitions and accept women in the shipping industry as their equals. The Global economy led to dislocation of workers and enterprises, engaging sudden accumulations and migrations of money capital. Despite the optimism from the beginning, globalisation did not represent the dawn of a new prosperity era for everybody. This is the reason why the international community admitted that the establishment of fundamental game rules was necessary in the scope of guaranteeing that globalisation gives everybody (men or women) a chance to reach prosperity. Inequalities generate poverty, a productivity decrease, social instability and even conflicts while the guarantee of equal chances meant only the recognition of what was always there for everybody's benefit. Women needed to be allowed to prove how useful they may be instead of being rejected right from the beginning without any previous thought.

2. Equal conditions for everybody

Given that the international legal framework regarding social regulations guarantees everybody equal conditions for work in the world economy, maritime universities should not make an exception. Such regulations helped maritime universities worldwide to give in to the temptation of lowering the working norms in the hope of getting a higher advantage in the maritime society. In the long term, such a practice would not be profitable for anybody.

Because the international working quotas are minimum norms adopted by governments and social partners, maritime universities acknowledged the fact that it is to the benefit of each one of them to adopt all these norms so those who do not apply them would not compromise the effort of those who do.

Lowering the standards of working quotas in universities encourages educational development with a low level of competence, low wages and high rotation of personnel and these may cause, for the specific university, the impossibility of developing stable qualified training services. As a matter of fact, this kind of practices could, if not controlled, put a stop to the economic growth of self supporting universities.

2.1 Female work force

Except for several regions worldwide, women represent at least one third of the world work force. In over 90 countries, more than 50% of the women are economically active. There have never before been so many women working in the whole period of their procreation time, especially because a majority of families depend on both parents' wages as far as the survival point of view is concerned. However, in spite of the importance of women in countries' economy and despite the incomes generated for their families, social protection is very often inadequate for protecting those who work and their families. The shipping industry represents a particular case due to its specific work conditions.

2.2 Equal chances and treatment

All over the world, millions of women and men are refused access to work and formation. They get low salaries or they are quartered in certain jobs only because of their gender (this is still the case in the maritime sector), skin colour, ethnic reasons or religion without taking into account their abilities or qualifications. Thus, in certain industrialised countries, female workers get, for equal work, a wage that might be as little as 25% of that earned by a man. Protection against discrimination is part of fundamental human rights and is indispensable for workers so that they can freely choose their work place and, in this way, develop their potential and pick up the merits of their work. Favouring equality in the workplace is synonymous with important economic advantages. For maritime universities, this would mean more well trained teaching personnel with a better quality in education. For women lecturers it means an easier access to training and, very often, higher chances of pursuing their passion for maritime related subjects without having to go onboard ships.

The benefits of a global maritime educational system are better allocated in an egalitarian society and they generate a higher social stability and a wider support from people in favour of educational development. ILO Regulations regarding equality propose instruments that allow elimination of discrimination from all the aspects of work and society. They equally constitute the basis from which arises the

application of integration strategies for equality problems between men and women in the work field.

3. Women's integration in the maritime field

3.1 Women in the shipping industry

IMO produced its strategy for the integration of women into the maritime sector in 1988 and began implementation of the IMO Women in Development Programme (WED) in 1989, concentrating on equal access to maritime training through both mainstream programs and gender specific projects. Employment in the shipping industry provides access to foreign currency and a regular salary with a direct impact on the economic viability of seafarers and their extended families. There is no intrinsic reason why women should not participate in, and benefit from, employment within the shipping industry.

The IMO Women In Development (WED) Programme was launched in 1989 with the following development objectives: to integrate women into mainstream maritime activities; to improve women's access to maritime training and technology; to increase the percentage of women at the senior management level within the maritime sector; and to promote women's economic self-reliance, including access to employment.

In some countries, the shipping industry offers a way out of poverty for many workers. Today, the problem of equal chances in the maritime field represents a challenge for obtaining human progress, respect and recognition of human rights. The maritime educational system also has a moral responsibility to train students to respect principles such as tolerance, solidarity and respect for others. This is done right from the beginning by employing women lecturers in maritime universities and accepting female students for the maritime specializations.

In a specific area such as maritime, gender equality has always been an issue due to the differences that exist among enrolments per gender at maritime engineering universities. There has always been a difference between men's and women's decisions to follow maritime engineering studies in all countries and at all times. For years, women had the false impression that the maritime business is forbidden for them. Men were the ones conducting this business and they have never allowed women access as this would have looked like an intrusion in a sector that for centuries has been exclusively under men's control.

Many countries (developed countries) still restrict women's access to the maritime business (educational system, shipping, port operations). Even maritime students find it difficult to learn from a woman teacher as they do not perceive her as a real seafarer. That means that they will always question her judgement.

The relevance of sea experience for many shore-based jobs means that the resource of women with appropriate skills is limited and will continue to act as a long-term constraint on the representation of women in the maritime sector as a whole.

There may also be some cultural resistance to women working outside their home, but the principal objections to employing women at sea or in maritime-relat-

ed activities appear to centre on lack of adequate separate facilities for women on board, stringent physical requirements and practical experience.

The perception that seafaring is a man's job can lead to lack of training and work-experience opportunities for women, compounded by employers' reluctance to appoint those women that are trained. To break the cycle, adequate training has a critical role in the integration of women into all spheres of professional life, with special emphasis on improving accessibility at all levels to potential women applicants.

The number of women working at sea is insignificant with women representing just one to two percent of the world's 1.25 million seafarers. Most women at sea are from developed countries. Women on board ships tend to be found in catering and administrative services; therefore, the proportion of women in the crew on passenger ships and ferries is relatively high. Radio communications is another area employing women.

3.2 Women's access to maritime training

Socio-cultural factors are thought to be behind the extremely low proportion of women seafarers in some countries. It is clear that, if women are to be fully accepted in the maritime sector, there is a need for changes in attitude towards employing women as seafarers, recruitment of women in the shipping sector generally including the maritime teaching area, and increased training opportunities for women.

There are over 90 maritime training institutions in more than 60 countries. Many admit only men or just a small number of women. Female lecturers are in a minority and tend to provide expertise in courses aimed at shore personnel, in maritime law and in general subjects such as English language, computer science, maritime and business studies and shipping management.

The shortage of maritime lecturers is in nautical studies and engineering, but lecturers are also needed in maritime law, economics and shipping insurance. This happens mainly due to low salaries involved in education relative to the money earned at sea and in the shipping sector. A solution for the lack of experienced maritime teachers would be to attract women that quit sailing after a period of time towards this career. This is because they are the ones looking for shore-based jobs related to the maritime business in a higher percentage than men who quit sailing only after getting a managerial licence and many years at sea.

4. Women in Constanta Maritime University

Analyzing the maritime labour market, anyone can easily see that it depends on supply and demand of labour. As Constanta is a maritime city with an exit to the Black Sea, there is a high demand for well trained people in all maritime domains (port, shipping, officers and so on). The demand for labour comes from shipping companies, port authorities and administrations, companies that operate inside the port and from companies adjacent to the port operations (pilot companies and tug companies). The maritime labour supply is an attractive one, especially because of the high salaries involved in the maritime business. Because of the status of Romania as a developing country, the maritime sector is still a sector that offers high salaries and, in this way, it manages to attract a lot of young people to follow a maritime related career. Recently,

Romanian women have become interested in having a maritime career even if they are aware that they have to overcome the prejudgements that Romanian people have not gotten rid of yet; those saying that women have no place in maritime businesses as these are male businesses. Constanta Maritime University is the first of two maritime universities in the country that allowed female students to apply in this specific higher-education area.

4.1 Ex-students/Future lecturers

Women have been accepted as students in Constanta Maritime University since 1995 and it has been noticed from the beginning that they found a way to adjust to this male environment. Since then, every year, more and more women chose to become students of the University as they realised that the shipping industry might no longer be an exclusively male domain. The first generation of female bachelor degree holders was in 2000 and this was also the year when women became interested in maritime teaching jobs as they had the opportunity of working on land in the same field of their qualification. It was also in the interest of the University to attract more and more women to work inside the teaching departments because men refused to do this since they were interested in going to sea mostly because of the wages involved. At the moment, Constanta Maritime University has 30 women lecturers working in the Navigation Faculty out of a total number of 57 lecturers and 17 women lecturers in the Mechanical Engineering Faculty out of a total number of 41 lecturers. Most of them have been recently hired and they need the University's support to improve their teaching methods, to get proper training in order to do their job properly and to prove that they are as good as men in doing this.

An internal statistic of Constanta Maritime University's employment shows that in the period of 2008 – 2010, the percentage of women hired as assistant professors was approximately 90% of the total number of assistants hired during this period. The conclusion that could be drawn is that the University is actually trying to equal the number of women and men that teach here and that there has been no difference between women's performance and men's performance as far as teaching inside a maritime institution is concerned. So, for the moment, nobody can argue that women or men are better suited for this particular job. There is indeed something that everybody can agree with: the fact that both categories (women or men) need continuous training as the maritime sector is a changing one (every year there are new improvements as far as the electronic aids for navigation are concerned). Let us not forget that there are new methods of teaching emerging every year and every teacher, regardless of their specialty, has to be updated to these.

4.2 European projects for self improvement

Constanta Maritime University is trying to attract more and more women to the teaching staff. What could help the University achieve everything above are the European Projects that provide the necessary funds for the continuous training of maritime higher-education teachers and for supplying improvement programmes according to the maritime market demands. The general objective of such projects is the development of multi-disciplinary research regarding initial and continuous training of maritime higher-education teachers belonging to Constanta Maritime University (especially women that have a Constanta Maritime University bachelor degree) and also the supply of improvement programmes according to the maritime

market demands. Women are the ones that can benefit from such projects as, in the past few years, they have been the ones who have been employed by Constanta Maritime University as young assistant professors. This happened mostly because, after obtaining their officer on watch licence and navigating for a couple of years, they gave up on sea-life and decided to work in the education system.

Fulfilment of these projects' main objective will lead to a competitive rise of job opportunities in maritime higher-education and it will manage to attract the new bachelor degree holders towards a maritime teaching career with a high interest focused on women because they are the ones who do not particularly want a sailing career.

The job offer in Constanta Maritime University is not discriminatory with all young assistants, regardless of their gender, being able to benefit from this program for training. As far as equal chances for men and women are regarded, we can honestly say that, in an industry dominated not so long ago mostly by men, the presence of women in Constanta Maritime University is no longer seen as an abnormality. Moreover, it should be stated here that the women in our university also have access to managerial levels occupying all sorts of leading positions in the university's organizational structure.

Women in the maritime engineering higher-education system could be the answer to the lack of good and experienced maritime lecturers that could help students better understand the life at sea and the problems it implies. But this means that these particular universities have to put out an additional effort in promoting their job offers in the city where they have their base and also to help women have an equal access with men to these jobs.

5. Conclusion

First of all we should conclude with the fact that women should be encouraged to apply to national institutions for training in technical maritime subjects. At the same time, national and regional maritime training centres should be encouraged to admit women students with prerequisite educational background.

The paper points out that the availability of more opportunities for women could increase the self-sufficiency of developing countries in their supply of qualified maritime teachers while providing increased visibility of women as role models in a variety of key maritime professions.

Therefore, accepting women in the maritime sector and in all its afferent domains is very important for the development of these areas. It is generally accepted that if women progress then everybody will benefit. After accepting women on board merchant ships the best result would be to accept them in the maritime universities teaching maritime engineering subjects as they now have the proper experience to successfully fulfil these jobs.

Even if Constanta Maritime University had for many years mostly men in the teaching staff, now the situation is constantly changing as more and more women choose such a special didactic career.

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