

## **HOW CAN WOMEN BE ENCOURAGED TO WORK IN MARITIME PROFESSIONS? - POSSIBILITIES FOR FLEXIBLE POST-GRADUATE STUDIES**

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**Abstract.** Maritime industry has traditionally been strongly dominated by men. Accordingly International Transport Worker's Federation world's maritime workforce still consist only 2% of women. There is need to improve these statistics and encourage women to build maritime career alongside with men, both at sea and on shipping related professions. Many prejudices and a lack of awareness about working in the field of shipping can affect women's willingness to seek into work places maritime sector. There can be many limiting issues for women, for instance many maritime related jobs ashore require experience from sea. [1] Not all possible professions available in maritime industry may be obvious for a young female who is making her career plans. A function of the socio-economic climate and social culture within different state have an influence on the seafarer manpower requirements. This can lead to diverse requirements for access into different shore-based sectors and seafarer have difficult to enter these positions due to the qualification level required. [2]

Agenda of several international organisations, governmental agencies and private organisations have been to promote the progress of women in maritime sector during the several decades. To attract women in the industry, also schools and educational institutions should have policies to help women understand and know about maritime professions. There is need for improvement of career awareness and preparedness. Planning of the future studies and profession start in early stage and young people need to have enough information and knowledge enough about different possibilities developing their careers before high school or college level, so that they can choose and concentrate on wanted courses in good time. For example, in Finland some high schools are offering advanced maritime courses in their curriculums.

This paper presents a survey conducted about women's role in maritime professions and career possibilities, using both experiences of students of Master programme in Maritime

Management in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences and interviews of graduated bachelor and master alumni's from the same University. This paper describes the current situation about the women's interest to seek their way to the maritime industry as well as presents possibilities how women can be encouraged to plan their career path first at sea on vessels and later, how can they make good use their valuable work experience at sea in shore-based organizations.

In this study the reasons for alumini's seeking into maritime profession are mostly explained by family's sea going careers and traditions. Also, a general interest towards maritime profession affects on willingness to seek the profession of the seafaring. Results of the survey relieved that the reasons for further studies for women interviewed were inclination to self-development and improving their career possibilities in labour market.

This article introduces the post-graduate studies that take into account student's sea going experience and can be accomplished at the same time when working and can support the progress of personal career.

This Master programme has been especially tailored to meet women's demand for a work in a land-based organization. Approximately 10 per cent of the graduates are women which is a lot more than women in general in maritime profession. The statistic survey reveals which has been conducted that the motivation among women students in master programme is higher and percentage of graduating students is especially high. Flexibility of the study programme has especially benefited women's participation and fast graduation. Reasons for this will be reported in the article and more closely surveyed in the interviews.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Maritime industry has traditionally been strongly dominated by men. World's maritime workforce consists still only 2 % of female accordingly International Transport Worker's Federation statistics. In the global maritime cluster number of women increase slowly especially in cruise ships and also shore-side. One limiting issue for women participating in the maritime related jobs available ashore is that many of those places require experience from sea. [1]

To promote the progress of women in maritime sector has been on the agenda of several international organisations, such as WISTA (Women's International Shipping and Trading Association) among other, governmental agencies and private organisations during the several decades. Especially furtherance of gender equality has been an objective of the United Nations (UN) and its specialized agencies. [3] Development of the first programme to foster the advancement of women in the maritime industry was made by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1988. The programme was called "Strategy on the Integration of Women in the Maritime Sector" (IWMS) and its main goals was to "*encourage IMO Member States to open the doors of their maritime institutes to enable women to train alongside men and so acquire the high-level of competence that the maritime industry demands*". [4] In other

words, the idea of IWMS programme was to increase the presence of female workforce in the developing countries through education, training and transmission of knowledge. [3]

One of IMO's priorities has also been harmonization of regional support networks for women in the maritime sector all over the world. As an outcome of this, there is nowadays seven regional associations for women in several continents. These regional networking platforms have provided possibilities for discussions about gender issues. [4] The need for the development of a new strategies to strengthen the role of women in the maritime sector has been realised and the sharing of the experiences of succeeded female role models have been important.

## **2 GENDER ISSUES AND MARITIME CAREER**

The women's right to receive education and equal possibilities to work are still not obvious everywhere in the world. There are many barriers which may have an influence for female seeking into maritime related jobs. Some of those reasons are related to cultural and social issues and also to family and practical matters. How to arrange and balance family life and work at sea are often the big issues and have an influence on female career choices. Women may have to wrestle with masculine norms and values and therefore women's agency in male dominated occupations is continuously confronted. [5]

Possible career paths in maritime sector may differ between countries due to education systems and young women can have difficult to have information about all available career options. The study concerning career paths in the maritime industries in Europe made by European Community Shipowners' Association (ECSA) and the European Transport Worker's Federation (ETF) in 2005 pointed that there is a range of obstacles for career development, like a lack of information about jobs opportunities, how to arrange funding for further studies and the argument that shore jobs may often require re-location. A function of the socio-economic climate and social culture within different state have an influence to the seafarer manpower requirements. According to the study, it can lead to diverse requirements for access into different shore-based sectors and seafarer have difficult to enter these positions due to the qualification level required. [2]

Several research has been made about women working at sea and their career in male dominated environment. As example of this is a bachelor thesis *Female master mariner's adjustment to working life* which was made by two female students from Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. According to their study the majority of women end up working ashore not only when starting own family, but also when new interesting job opportunities show up from shore based organizations in maritime industry. One important thing for women in their career making was to have a meaningful and challenging job but salary also play some role. [6]

### 3 RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative study collected experiences of Finnish women who work in maritime sector. Study was conducted during spring 2018 by interviewing graduated female alumns from both degree programs Sea Captain and Master of Maritime Management. All participants had seagoing experience at least as a deck officer level and current vacancies were either on ship or ashore such as port or maritime administrations, specialist in maritime technology company or shipowning company. Ages of participants were between 35 and 45 years.

The objectives of this study consisted of five questions:

1. What were reasons originally for you to seek into maritime profession?
2. What were the reasons for you to start studying in the degree program master of maritime management?
3. How has the master of maritime management degree benefit you career development?
4. How could women be encouraged to work in maritime professions?
5. How does gender affect on career development in maritime professions?

#### 3.1 Results of the study

1. Like many other researches have shown, also in this study the reasons for seeking into maritime profession are mostly explained by family member(s) who have worked at sea and have affected this study participant's career choice. Another reason for starting maritime studies was just a general interest toward maritime profession.

2. Second question was about the motives to start further studies in the degree program Master of Marine Management. The reasons for further studies for these women were inclination to continuous self-development and improving their possibilities in labour market by broadening their knowledge and accomplish a higher degree. Often management level positions in maritime industry require a higher educational degree. Alumni women also considered that their education have improved their changes when competing for new vacancies or promotions.

4. According to this inquiry, there should be more information available about the jobs and career possibilities in maritime sector both at sea and ashore. Also sharing of "success stories" and maybe some kind of mentoring system would be beneficiary. On the subject of family and children, women thought that it is possible to combine motherhood and career at sea. To encourage women to seek into maritime career, the participants described maritime profession to be interesting, challenging and requiring many skills. An international environment and workmates from different countries were mentioned as an advantage.

5. Some answerers felt that women still need to be twice as good to be half as appreciated when working in masculine profession. A "good brother" societies are still alive even though the work climate is slowly changing. The other opinions were that gender doesn't affect the career development and they have got promotions as quickly as men. The experience of

Finnish women at maritime sector were that presence of female improves the teamwork and work atmosphere.

#### **4 POSSIBILITIES TO MARITIME POST GRADUATE STUDIES IN FINLAND**

Satakunta University of Applied Sciences started to develop a Master of Maritime Management programme in the beginning of 2000 decade. This Master programme has been especially tailored to meet women's demand for a work in a land-based organization and one of the main targets of the programme is to generate equality of women seeking to maritime professions. If there is no clear "career-bridge" from ship to shore, it is very difficult to describe the lucrativeness of maritime profession for women in the first place.

Approximately 10 per cent of the graduates are women which is a lot more than women in general in maritime profession. The statistic survey which has been conducted reveals that the motivation among women students in Master Programme is higher and percentage of graduating students is especially high. Almost 100 percent of women who are accepted to the programme also graduate. There is substantial difference to men where the percentage is closer to 50 % than 100 %. Ninety present of women who have graduated, have also moved to land based organizations during next year after graduation.

Flexibility of the study programme has especially benefited women's participation and fast graduation. Most women have already started to seek land based jobs during the studies and most of them have also started to raise family during studies or soon after graduation. Flexibility of the distance studies has also made it possible to study during maternal leave. Before 2000's most women needed to seek other education possibilities and start another career path if they wanted to start working ashore.

As Master of Maritime Management education builds on existing STCW based education, it is a "fast-track" to maritime ashore career compared to all previous possibilities for both women and men – However, in general for women it was more difficult to start studying to another profession as usually the cultural situation before 2000's was that very few men stayed home with children. Now in 2000's with a degree of 60 credits and only approximately 12-15 contact lecture days during the 1,5 years studies, it is relatively easy to organize the studies also for women who often need to manage their families after they have moved from ship to shore.

When the Master of Maritime Management programme has now been firmly established and has been running for 12 years already, it has clearly benefited women's career paths and made it easier to plan it.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The survey which was conducted reveals that many of the women now in profession have a connection to maritime profession already from home (father, relative etc.). If we want to encourage more women to maritime professions, we need to inform also those who do not have this kind of connection and existing knowledge of the profession by family ties. The information and knowledge need to be promoted through schools, internet and social networks.

One of the next steps to be taken is to make it more visible also in the high schools where the pupils are planning their careers in other words women should be able to plan their careers already from the beginning.

Without the knowledge of the possibility of continuing the “seawomens” career ashore after this Master degree as further education, many possible women might be lost to other professions, if they are not able to visualize the combination of career at sea, career ashore and building a family align with the maritime profession.

The women who work in maritime professions should justified be more visible and serving as examples for girls and women instead of hiding in masculine working environment and just trying to be “one of the guys”.

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