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Maritime Education and Development in India - A Concise Study

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1. INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the Globalisation and Liberalisation in the early 20th century, and due to development of 'Concept of Welfare States', people in all walks of life are becoming increasingly aware of welfare and safety issues in their daily routines. They are unwilling to compromise to those levels of risk which were accepted in the 19th century. Maritime sector is no exception to this trend. To recount, the disaster of the ship 'Titanic' augured home the fact that even un-sinkable ship cannot escape the nature's fury. Hence, safety at sea is a paramount concern of all stakeholders in the mari-time sector.

International Maritime Organisation (IMO) (a specialised agency of UN governing the ship-ping affairs) was established, after a lot of concocted efforts, in 1959, to bring co-operation in technical and other aspects of shipping, and to monitor safety and maritime sector development globally. Over the sixty years of its inception, IMO has developed and promoted the adaption of more than 40 conventions and protocols as well as over 1000 Codes and recommendations dealing with maritime Education, safety, the prevention of pollution at sea, liability and compensation instruments, and other matters concerning shipping. All the maritime nations have accepted majority of these statutory norms. The shipping industry of India started grappling with the ever increasing demands of a new liberalised era. To stay in the competition, India required to follow as per various international agreements to maintain her ship-ping and maritime business. This tantamount to, India has to maintain an international regulatory environment in line with global agencies particularly of IMO, meeting all its guidelines, implementation of various conventions and legislations. India also need to amend its national laws adhering to International structures such as United Nation Convention on Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), World Trade Organisation (WTO) Conference at Uruguay in 1994, General Agreement for Trade in Services (GATS) in 1998 and other related international rules and regulations for the smooth operation of her ships and the maritime business.

As is evident, most marine operations involve a wide variety of personnel, scattered all over the world, with different cultural back-grounds, operating under a glut of international laws and regulations. Many decades ago most shipping companies were managed by people from the developed nations and ships were manned by crews from traditional seafaring nations. The industry relied only on good schooling and tradition of onboard training.

2. PRESENT SCENARIO

Today, most ships are operated by crews from developing countries whose performance is a function of individual capabilities, management policies, cultural factors, experience, training, work environment and innumerable other factors. As a matter of fact, the 'human element' in ship-ping and its related sectors has become more complex and multi-dimensional issue that directly affects maritime safety, security and marine environment in particular. It involves the entire spectrum of human activities performed by the ship's crew, shore based management, and other related stake-holders, all of whom need necessarily co-operate to address human element issues effectively.

It was observed that, today the ship operations depend a lot on the capabilities of the ship personnel and the ship manager. The support ser-vices provided by good charts, navigational aids, and port operational services also help to follow the procedures with special attention to safety of operations. Hence, today shipping has become a 'joint-venture' of ship personnel, Industry and the Governments.

International convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for sea-farers (STCW Convention) is the basis for forming maritime educational curriculum. This convention primarily covers a wide range of designed courses to impart and improve the skills of maritime work-force. The same convention has built-in implementation instruments which put pressure on the regulatory authorities of the maritime nations to improve and raise the output of educational institutions to that of those specified standards.

Maritime Education as a discipline used to be concerned earlier with training of personnel to carryout various tasks on board. Often these educational institutions are viewed as specialized vocational training centers from the traditional point of view. The importance of maritime resources and the contribution potential towards development is being recognized only in the recent times, particularly after the globalisation and opening up of economy. This has resulted in widening the opportunities for maritime education and more so, higher education for the service sector. The corollary effect is an increased plan for investment in maritime sector. So if maritime educational institutions could break free from the specific sea-going or competency tests for shipping training and move towards joint-venture between ship and shore training system, it could harness the opportunity to close the educational gap that separates them from evolving new systems and procedures as per the industry needs. It will also facilitate the closure of

the knowledge gap and specialisation that prevails in the developed and under-developed nations, which is more particularly true in the case of maritime education.

3. MODERN MARITIME EDUCATION AND SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

It has been realised that the 'Knowledge Gap' between people onboard and ashore seems to be widening drastically. Those who were trained by neo-classical approach found to be up-to-date on the latest 'safe practices', but are quite often unfamiliar with the commercial aspects of the Maritime Industry. Similarly, with regard to the shore-side operations, due to increase in more shore responsibilities and lack of persons with professional experience, they were staffed with per-sons who do have scant idea of maritime environment.

This study reveals that modern maritime education is attempting to succeed, in combining theory and practical application of knowledge acquired about sea and maritime affairs. The curriculum followed in maritime educational institutions attempt to closely follow the best approach to suit the industry needs starting from the very basics, or 'beginning at the very beginning' of the actual environmental conditions onboard the ship.

This approach of maritime education attempts to bring up the youth to the entry level in such a manner that he/she can adapt to the changing conditions onboard in the shortest period of time through real time experience as apprentice. It was observed that most students after doing marine courses in the higher education sector and seafarer/offshore industry based on training to join foreign companies and serve the international needs. They earn high salaries in foreign currency but during their vacation they come back to their families and spend their incomes. This contributes

3 (a). AN OVERVIEW OF INDIAN MARITIME EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The growth pattern of maritime educational institutions from 1990 to 2008 reveals that increase in the number of government institutions is only around 66% and while in contrast private institutions have grown by around 4000% . Maritime educational institutions in India, as per Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) report, constitutes - 32 institutions for Nautical officers, 48 institutions for Engineer officers, 46 institutions for non- officers category (commonly known as ratings) and about 60 institutions imparting various training as per STCW Convention.

The institutions when analysed as per the higher education system of the country, can be categorised as: one deemed university under 'de novo' category- AMET University (established in 2007), one central university – Indian Maritime University (established in 2008), about fifty institutions offering maritime education as per higher education system of the country and balance can be termed as tertiary institutions offering certificates, diplomas, etc., but not recognised by University Grant Commission. (Apex institution of the higher education system of our country under Ministry of Human Resources Development). The observation of the age of students reveals that majority (79%) are between 20-24 years, 17% are less than 20 years and 4%

are 25 years and above. The study of Gender of students shows that 99% are males and 1% are females. Majority (about 85%) of students are doing DGS approved courses.

The enquiries indicate that reason for selecting the course by students are economic factors like job opportunities, pay and conditions, career factors like attraction to the marine field had high influence. Social factors like parents and family influence have less affect. The study reveals that majority (81%) of students come from family whose members are not related to maritime industry, only 19% pursuing have someone in the family who have taken the same profession.

The study of payment of fee indicates that 37% students are fully dependent on loan, 23% partly on loan and only 40% students family are able to manage fee themselves. The study of ranking of expectation from maritime educational institutions reveals that 38% feels that knowledge specific to industry is needed as first priority. Second priority 31.5% is given to skill specific to Industry. Issues like broadening of vision, job specific skills, and character building have low priority. The re-searcher found that the universities alone have the unique privilege of a continuous flow of young and fresh minds that are conducive to creative effort. It also possesses the kind of atmosphere and the congregation of scholars needed for free discussion, debate, enquiry and investigation in search of knowledge.

The study reveals that the institutional facilities so far created and listed above, would show clearly that barring management, the maritime educational institutions have concentrated in the fields of professional disciplines predominantly in producing undergraduate students for industry entry level. The enormous numbers of maritime educational institutions are tutorial institutions preparing the students for the competency examinations and training for skills.

The analysis indicates that higher education patterns do not strictly confirms to international practice in institutional structure. It was also noticed that institutions have to, over a period of time, on a planned basis, move maritime higher education which is now, mostly in the ‘vertical type of system’ predominantly, if not completely, to an higher education with new breath, innovation and excellence. This is an inevitable requirement to ensure that maritime higher education in Tamil Nadu finds its place in with other disciplines.

Furthermore, the evidence depicts that though the maritime educational institutes rose in number after the adaptation of Liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation policy in India and Tamil Nadu in particular has many maritime higher education institutions, the maritime field in India lacks research tilt to it. Until now the various institutions imparts education to the students to improve their skills and competence to work in maritime structure but the institutions lag behind in providing cutting edge research and development in maritime education.

4. FINAL OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

To conclude, the study reveals that higher education in the maritime field is a particular do-main of the professional education. The main characteristics are given by the existence of an international standard imposed by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) ratified by the national administration that is compulsory for all maritime courses intended for seagoing combined with the national higher education system curricula, that is also compulsory in accordance with the national standards to obtain degree.

The globalisation has been progressing rapidly in the international shipping arena due net-working of supra national agencies. The shipping and its related industry is a service industry, in which human resources onboard ship as end-users are the critical element. The rise in public awareness has made safety, environmental protection and security as critical issues for the maritime skills and knowledge to the human resources on a global scale, so that global maritime industry can retain its smooth functioning. This is only possible if maritime industry receives highly qualified human resources from maritime educational institutions. With the establishment of universities with maritime focus, the opportunity for higher education in India for mariners has been created. Today maritime higher education system can be defined

as an education system which meets the human resource requirement of the society by providing trained and qualified manpower to the maritime industry.

After the adaptation of policy of liberalisation, maritime education was identified as one of the ways to upward social mobility, a stepping stone to a high-flying career in maritime transport. Once human element and globalisation of education came into picture, it brought convergence of technology in maritime sector. Maritime education started to become a field which is quite independent of shipping industry, requiring new policies and regulators with a tilt towards the knowledge base.

The study reveals that now with the use of technology and improved means of communications, the land controlling over the ships in the sea is increasing and the dependence of the seamen on instructions from the land is also increasing. Thus, the ideas of self-dependency and self-control have given way to co-operative action. As various empirical evidences shown, education plays important role in empowering children and adults to be alert and active in every endeavour.

Furthermore, in democracies, active and alert citizens act as effective participant who fulfill the noble goal of self-governed society. Such knowledge will further strengthen nations through active participation in service sector as effective workforce. According to this trend, India is shifting its focus from manufacturing to services sec-tor. To develop a strong service sector, in

future higher education has to play greater role in improving employability and developing economy. It will also facilitate to close the knowledge gap between developed and under-developed economies, and this is a mute point in case of higher education. This proves beyond doubt that successful education policy in maritime sector will form the backbone of all fields in the national development.