

Establishment of a Common Platform for the Maritime Education and Training

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Abstract

MET acronym stands for Maritime Education and Training and is primarily concerned with the Seafarers' education and training aspects in particular seafaring officers.

The maritime industry is a vital sector in the world economy, which covers more than forty professional areas and it is inherent that most of them have close relations with the seafaring profession. The recent SAIL AHEAD project studies demonstrated that seafaring officers may easily be adapted to most jobs in the maritime industry with some additional education and training efforts. Many of the jobs ashore are carried out by experienced seafarers.

The maritime business is an international practice that is conducted worldwide and needs standard applications to ensure all involved apply the same norms and fulfil the requirements as agreed.

The ship is the main element of the maritime industry and is supported by ports/terminals, shipping companies, ship building and maintenance facilities. There is a close relation between the seafaring profession and the jobs ashore. A great deal of study is conducted regarding the seafarers' training in the world and common standards are achieved in this field. Therefore, seafarers' education and training may be a good base to start standardisation for the profession in the maritime industry ashore.

UniMET, which is a funded European Union MET project, has intended to form a common platform for these studies and this platform will additionally be supported by an online tool. The MariFuture project on the other hand, has initiated a comprehensive study on maritime education and training to meet the future needs of the maritime industry.

The paper argues that it is a good idea to establish a common platform for the purpose of conducting studies to meet the educational needs of the maritime industry, by benefiting from the outcomes of these two above stated projects. Thus, there will be an opportunity to establish standards and facilitate operations in the maritime business worldwide. A study that we shall call "Establishment of a Common Platform for Maritime Education and Training in the maritime sector (COMPLEMET)" so as to meet the overall requirements of maritime industry is considered to be immensely beneficial.

KEY WORDS: Maritime Education and Training, Maritime Industry,

1. Introduction

Maritime industry is a vital sector in the world economy. The main human element of the sector is the seafarers. Number of the seafarers who work in the shipping industry worldwide is over 1.2 million [1]. Employment opportunities provided by shipping sector are not just for seafarers but a whole range of people directly or indirectly supporting shipping. There are a number of sub-sectors and companies within scope of shipping activities and altogether they create a serious employment opportunity [2]. The sector covers over more than thirty professional areas and it is inherent that most of them have close relations with the seafaring profession (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Professions Working in or for the Maritime Sector

The shipping is a global business and there are international set of rules, standards and requirements which are expected to be met.

The facilitation of the maritime operations throughout the world is a significant aim of the IMO (International Maritime Organisation) and standardisation is the key element to create common procedures and enable easy cooperation between the workers from different nations and cultures.

As far as standardization of the human element in the sector is concerned, the early studies started for seafarers in the 1970s and STCW 78 has consequently been adopted. The main aim of the STCW is to provide a common understanding between seafarers of the world through the standardization of education and training. STCW has been reviewed and renewed in 1976 and in 2010 to meet the new requirements. Although there are still some discrepancies and problem areas big steps have been taken to achieve standardization in MET.

MET stands for Maritime Education and Training and it cover primarily the seafarers' education and training aspects in particular for seafaring officers. It does not cover the other professions in the maritime sector. In order to provide standardization for the jobs other than seafaring, different nations have created national standards but these, as yet, are not internationally recognised.

Recent European Union SAIL AHEAD project studies proved that seafaring officers may easily be adapted to most of the jobs ashore in the maritime industry with some additional education and training efforts [3]. It is also evident that most of the professions in the maritime sector rely heavily on seafaring officers.

The ship is the main element of the maritime industry that is supported by ports/terminals, shipping companies, ship building and maintenance facilities. As described before there is a close relationship

between the seafaring profession and the jobs ashore. A great deal of studies is conducted regarding the seafarers' training in the world and common standards are achieved in this field. Therefore, seafarers' education and training may be a sound starting point of standardization for the jobs ashore.

Most of the young people in the western world do not prefer to become a seafarer because they do not want to spend all their lives at sea. IMO's "Go to Sea" initiative aims to attract the young people to work at sea [4]. There is a close relationship between the training requirements for seafaring jobs and the job specification for shore occupations. So, seafarers training system can easily be adopted to cover requirements of some shore jobs or a seafarer may easily be trained for some shore jobs/professions. Such an option will encourage young people to become a seafarer.

2. The reality

The ships from different flags are loading and discharging in the ports and terminals of the different countries every day. Although, many standards have been established to facilitate the cooperation between the respective elements, many problems are still encountered during the ship- port operations. However, there is a good example viz., the BLU (Bulk Loading Unloading) Code which has been written to establish and standardize procedures to provide better cooperation and coordination between ships and the terminals and hence to solve the identified problems.

The passage period of a ship is directly related to the skills of the seafarers, meteorological conditions, whereas the voyage period is related to skills of the shore parties and the quality of the facilities at ports. It is almost impossible to reduce the passage period at sea due to technical and economic reasons. But time spent at the loading and discharging at ports may be reduced by integrating operations and improving the qualification of the shore personnel and improving facilities. The reduction of the port time will increase turnover of the ships and seriously affect the productivity of the shipping industry, also would reduce the emissions of harmful pollutants while at port.

It can not be denied that the efforts to improve the qualifications of the personnel who are deployed at the shore organisations, but these are specific qualifications generally based on local standards.

The shipping is an international business and gathers the people from different nations together in a unified working area. One of the main aims of the IMO Facilitation Committee is to facilitate the shipping operations by establishing standard procedures worldwide.

“The main objective of the IMO's Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention), adopted in 1965, is to achieve the most efficient maritime transport as possible, looking for smooth transit in ports of ships, cargo and passengers. This efficiency has a clear impact in trade growth, and therefore, in the economy. The FAL Convention contains "Standards" and "Recommended Practices" on formalities, documentary requirements and procedures which should be applied on arrival, stay and departure to the ship itself, and to its crew, passengers, baggage and cargo” (www.imo.org).

Not only IMO but also United Nations and other international organizations spend efforts on the facilitation and standardization of the international trade. The UNCTAD study completed in 2005 explains such efforts.

“The concept of trade facilitation has evolved over the past 10 years to include all Customs, transit and multimodal trade procedures, including transport and infrastructure issues. An informed and coordinated approach to trade facilitation activities requires regular input from business operators and public policy makers directly involved in international trade transactions and policymaking. The UNCTAD secretariat, in cooperation with UNECE, has for many years fostered the concept and the establishment of formal national trade facilitation bodies to find procedural and policy solutions to Customs, trade and transport problems” (UNCTAD, 2006).

To this end, it is evident that there is a common aim to establish standards and recommend practices in the shipping sector but there is not a significant attempt to provide standardization for the education and training for the personnel deployed in the shore facilities.

3. Resemblances/ Similarities between Seafarers and Shore Professions

The twelve groups of career paths in the maritime sector are found closely relevant to seafaring officers' profession (www.sailahead.eu). These career paths and 22 related job profiles professions are as follows;

Career Path: Port Authority officer

Job Profile: Port Authority officer

Career Path: Pilots

Job Profile: Pilot

Career Path: Arbitrators

Job Profile: Arbitrators

Career Path: Transport and cargo operations

Job Profile: Transport operator/manager

Job Profile: Freight broker/Shipbroker

Job Profile: Transportation & Dock Manager

Career Path: Jobs related to Environmental Protection

Job Profile: Environmental Engineer

Job Profile: Environmental Inspector

Job Profile: Water Inspector

Career Path: Entrepreneur

Job Profile: Hydrography officer

Job Profile: Shipchandler

Job Profile: Yacht construction/repairs manager

Career Path: Teachers / Professors / Trainers

Job Profile: Maritime Lecturer

Career Path: Auditors / Inspectors

Job Profile: Maritime Auditor

Job Profile: Maritime Surveyor (Inspector – Auditor)

Career Path: Advisors / Consultants

Job Profile: Marine Advisor/Consultant

Career Path: Coast Guard Officers

Job Profile: Coast Guard Officer

Career Path: Employees in shipping companies

Job Profile: Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Career Path: Quality managers / Occupational Health and Safety managers

Job Profile: Designated Person Ashore (DPA)

Job Profile: Quality manager

Job Profile: Occupational Health and Safety Manager

This study has been conducted in six countries and many differences have been found on the job profiles, skills and training requirements. Although six countries applies European Qualifications Framework (EQF) standards some professions' name were introduced in different ways in different countries. Some countries have institutes and agencies which establishes standard job profiles for some professions but not all.

The SAIL AHEAD National Conference was held at Istanbul on 15th of June 2013. The significant results of the conference may be summarised as follows [5]:

- The Maritime Industry wants qualified people for sea and for shore duties.
- The maritime education system can be improved through innovation as is the case with the SAIL AHEAD project, UniMET, SURPASS, M'aider and so forth.
- As maritime universities/academies/vocational high schools, there is need to establish consortia with industry to improve our MET systems in collaboration with accrediting, awarding and government bodies such as Edexcel, IMarEST and by working with international and European agencies such as IMO, EMSA (European Maritime Safety Agency), etc.
- MET provision should be improved and suitable learning tools (such as www.gmdss.com, www.captains.pro, www.martel.pro) for cadets and seafarers developed.
- There is need to learn from one another as well as continuing with existing EU funded projects such as M'aider and SURPASS to raise the quality of our MET provisions.
- SAIL AHEAD project should be enhanced and continued to improve a training system for shore duties of the maritime industry in particular the jobs which are closely related to the seafaring officers.

All above mentioned issues were also discussed and commonly agreed during the SAILAHEAD Transnational Conference at Athens on 28th of November in 2013. A study to design training programmes based on defined job specification is considered necessary and it could be submitted as a new European Union MET project.

The job specifications designed as a result of SAIL AHEAD covers all requirements for some important duties at shore facilities and provides sufficient data to design training requirements and programmes. So, already a good tool exists [3] to start a study on MET for shore based jobs for the maritime industry.

UniMET, which is a European Union MET project, has been intended to form a common platform for these studies and this platform is supported by UniMET online tool [6]. The MariFuture project on the other hand, has initiated a comprehensive study on the maritime education and training to meet the future needs of the maritime industry. [7]. These projects will support the MET providers to improve their existing programmes and initiate future proposal for their continuation and/or further developments.

Conclusion

The maritime education and training institutions have a considerable experience to improve their system. Many of them are able to create a full spectrum of education and training system for shore based professions of the maritime industry. It will be easier to start with the professions which are closely related to the seafarer's jobs. Most of the institutes have also experience of training personnel for some shore professions. The common platforms for MET studies have already been established for

seafarers and the experience gained in these platforms can be used to develop a new and integrated platform to include standards for shore jobs as well as jobs for ship crews.

It is strongly believed that it would be a good idea to establish a common platform for the purpose of conducting studies to meet the educational needs of maritime industry by benefiting from the outcomes of the recently develop projects such as SAIL AHEAD and UniMET. The basis of the common platform could be the existing MariFuture platform. Thus, there will be opportunity to establish common standards for shore profession of the maritime industry and facilitate operations in maritime business worldwide.

The proposed COMPLEMENT project could in fact lead to development of sea and shore jobs at the same time preparing the cadets for both sea and jobs ashore.

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